

# DOMESTIC RELIGION IN SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ENGLISH GENTRY HOUSEHOLDS

by

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A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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March 2017

## ABSTRACT

This research focuses on domestic religion: those activities through which everyday devotion and the worship of God were performed. It encompasses both the daily communal practices of family religion (prayer, psalm singing, catechising and sermon repetition) and the personal devotions of individuals (prayer, meditation and self-examination) in domestic space. It also considers the extraordinary religious practices of preparation for communion, days of fasting and humiliation, and the experience of sickness and death. The textuality of domestic religion is highlighted in a chapter on reading and writing. The published prescriptive advice is related to the reality of lived experience as revealed through the archives of seventeenth century families, most significantly those of the Harleys of Brampton Bryan in Herefordshire. Domestic religion was a highly complex contiguous cycle of enmeshed interrelated practices. The links were not only between domestic practices but also with public worship. A related theme challenges the supposed interiority of Protestant, and more particularly Puritan, piety, as it highlights the sociable nature of domestic religion. Domestic religion provides a useful lens throughout to explore consensus and division in seventeenth century religious politics and culture. Domestic religion was vital in the construction and projection of family identity.

For my father Kenneth Bowler.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would firstly like to thank my supervisors Prof. Richard Cust and Dr. Tara Hamling for their incredible support, depth of knowledge, and excellent advice on research and writing. Without their encouragement, patience, and generosity with time and tissues I am sure I would not have persevered. I would also like to thank the research community of the Centre for Reformation and Early Modern Studies at the University of Birmingham, and particularly attendees at The Early Modern Literature, Culture and Society seminar for friendship and academic inspiration.

I would like to thank Edward Harley for welcoming my family and I to Brampton Bryan and dedicating time to talk with an unknown researcher on the busiest day of the Brampton Bryan social calendar. Thanks are also due for kind permission to take and reproduce photographs.

Thanks are due to the staffs of the British Library Manuscripts Reading Room, the Derbyshire Record Office in Matlock, the Northamptonshire Record Office in Northampton, and the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington DC. for their kind assistance during research trips.

I have been in full-time employment throughout the research and writing of this PhD and thanks are therefore due to the many colleagues who have listened with sympathy to my tales of research and writing woe and encouraged me along the way. I also thank my friends, made throughout my studies, or long ago, who have likewise offered emotional support and encouragement.

I would like to thank my parents, Kenneth and Vivienne Bowler, for their encouragement and support, both financial and emotional, over my many years of study. I particularly thank my father for the unfailing pride in my academic pursuits, despite them being in history and not chemistry.

When I embarked upon this PhD I had no expectation of having a husband and child to thank by its conclusion, but life happens! Thank you to my husband Steven Counsell for his emotional and practical support over the last fourteen years, during which I have almost continually been studying. Latterly that has impacted on his life in significant ways and I thank him for his love and patience. Although his arrival did nothing to hasten the conclusion of this thesis, I thank my son Archibald Counsell. Although you are only two you say "I'm so proud of you Mummy" and that makes it all worthwhile.

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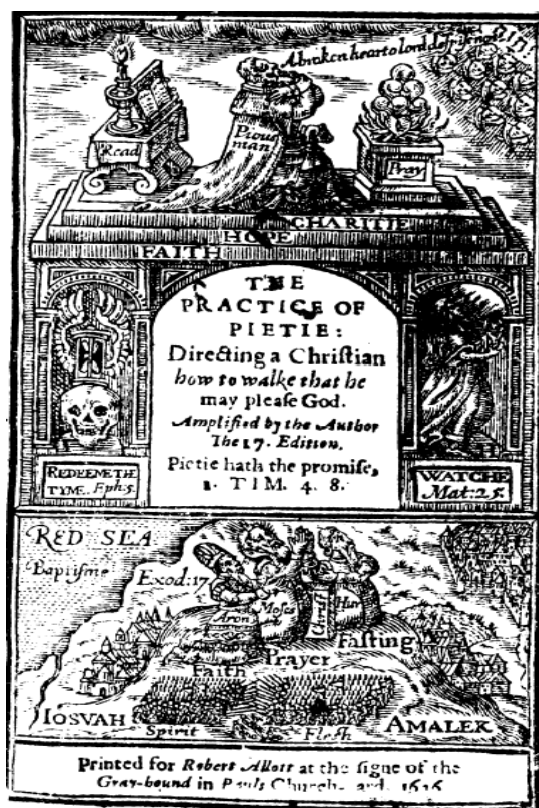
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## Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

The frontispiece of Lewis Bayly's seminal devotional guide *The Practise of Pietie: Directing a Christian how to walke that he may please God* (Figure 1) offers a simple vision of the life of piety.<sup>1</sup> The pious man is depicted in a domestic scene which unites reading the Bible and prayer in lighting the fire of faith. The centrality of prayer in leading a godly life is underlined by the visual representation of Exodus 17 where Joshua wins the battle over Amalek by means of the prayers of Moses. To make the analogy clear italics label Joshua's army as 'spirit' and Amalek's as 'flesh'. Although prayer is the pivotal element in winning the battle; as Moses was supported by Aron and Hur, prayer is supported by Christ, faith, and fasting.



**Figure 1:** Frontispiece to Lewis Bayly, *The Practise of Pietie directing a Christian how to walke that he may please God*, (1613).

<sup>1</sup> Lewis Bayly, *The Practise of Pietie directing a Christian how to walke that he may please God*, (London, 1613)



*The Practise of Pietie* was a bestseller in the genre of pious conduct manuals. First published in 1612, it was republished frequently throughout the seventeenth century; thirty-three editions appeared between 1613 and 1636 alone. It was translated into Welsh, German, Polish, French, Rumanian, and a Native American Language in New England. This manual of godly life adopted a practical tone and covered a wide variety of topics of interest to lay Christians. In addition to offering prayers and meditations it gave clear and didactic advice on the when, where, why, and how of those devotions as well as advice on other domestic religious practices. Bayly and his advice appealed to a large cross-section of seventeenth century society. Bayly was a Jacobean Bishop, sometimes described as a Puritan Bishop, who supported the authority of and conformity to the Church, and was a firm Calvinist who promoted key Calvinist theologies.<sup>2</sup> Recent research, of which this thesis is part, has shown that this striking visual distillation of a life of godly piety presents an oversimplified version, not only of Bayly's own prescriptive advice, but also of the vast corpus of prescriptive advice and the reality of lived experience in the seventeenth century.

Historians have, until relatively recently, replicated this simple image of domestic piety. For all the historical attention devoted to religion in the early modern period I was, at the outset of this research, struck by how little sustained and nuanced exploration of day-to-day devotional activity in the period there was. Past generations of historians were occupied with public worship and liturgical debates and were relatively uninterested in the personal and domestic. Yet early modern people spent one, perhaps two, days in liturgical worship at their parish church and vastly more time in their domestic space. Practices were listed by historians in straight-forward fashion. Christopher Hill wrote 'There were prayers twice

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<sup>2</sup> J. Gwynfor Jones and Vivienne Larminie, "Bayly, Lewis (c.1575–1631)" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, Jan 2008, accessed 6 Jan 2017, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1766>

daily, three times on Sundays: there was Bible-reading, and children and servants were catechized.<sup>3</sup> JT Cliffe wrote 'these exercises were to include the reading of holy scripture, the singing of psalms and the repetition of sermons' while devoting several pages to the recruitment of religiously like-minded servants and sermons.<sup>4</sup> Did the lists of practices given to characterise domestic and household religion by historians do justice to domestic religion as prescribed by clerics and practiced by lay people?

Slowly attention has turned to the domestic.<sup>5</sup> Literary scholars have been at the vanguard, attracted once more by the devotional books and personal writings of both men and women which form the evidence base for domestic religion. Close behind are the historians of reading and writing who are increasingly turning their attention to devotional contexts. The work on domestic religion is highly interdisciplinary. This can be seen in the edited collection *Private and Domestic Devotion in Early Modern Britain* bringing together historians of religion, art, music, and literary scholars.<sup>6</sup> This collection of essays is an important milestone in the field which I will return to below. A wide range of research fields feed into domestic religion. Some of the individual practices have their own extensive historiography, others are less well served. As each chapter will fully engage with the historiography, I will now trace the strands of research feeding into the main themes and primary research questions.

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<sup>3</sup> Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England*, (London: Pimlico, 2003; originally published in 1964), 392

<sup>4</sup> JT Cliffe, *The Puritan Gentry: The Great Puritan Families of Early Stuart England*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 30-1

<sup>5</sup> In 2008 Alec Ryrie, Judith Maltby, Jessica Martin, and Natalie Mears set up a AHRC research network to investigate questions of worship and devotion in the early modern period. This was the catalyst for a number of important essays, most notably the two edited volumes which derived from the network.

<sup>6</sup> Jessica Martin and Alec Ryrie, *Private and Domestic Devotion in Early Modern Britain*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013)

Approaches to the study of the family include psychohistory, family law, anthropology, sociology, demography, household economics, and studies investigating the emotions involved in early modern family life and relationships.<sup>7</sup> Lawrence Stone's landmark study of the early modern family located major changes in the period 1600-1800, including a transition in family structure from open wide kinship groups to the restricted patriarchal nuclear family, deepening emotional quality of family relationships, and a growing individualism. Stone attributed this change to the growth of the nation state, Protestant ideals of marriage and family and the individualistic nature of nascent capitalism.<sup>8</sup> More recently, historians have rejected this thesis and instead emphasised continuity in family structure and emotional depth in family relationships.<sup>9</sup> Although some historians have briefly touched upon religion in relation to marriage and the education of children, the history of the family has largely not considered the place of religion in family life.<sup>10</sup>

At the intersection of women's and family history has been the effect of the Reformation on the structure and role of the family and the status of women. Some have emphasised how Protestantism elevated the status of marriage as it denigrated the celibate life. This elevation is presented as a positive outcome for women, highlighting contemporary writings which

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<sup>7</sup> An early review of the field of family history was published by Tamara K Hareven "The History of the Family as an Interdisciplinary Field", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 2, no 2 (1971): 399-414; Will Coster, *Family and Kinship in England 1450-1800*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001), 7-12

<sup>8</sup> Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*, (London: Penguin, 1979; abridged edition), passim

<sup>9</sup> Ralph Houlbrooke, *The English Family 1450-1700*, (Harlow: Longman, 1984), 16; Coster, *Family and Kinship*, 9

<sup>10</sup> Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, passim; Coster, *Family and Kinship*, passim. Houlbrooke briefly touches on the importance of religion in choosing a marriage partner, religious education, and culture in the home and the role of religion and the family at death, emphasising continuity throughout the period and across confessional divides. However his book is structured around the traditional issues of the history of the family and serves only as an introduction to the intersection of the history of the family and the history of religion. Coster provides an up to date historiographical review of the history of the family, structured around the traditional categories of analysis, such as the emotions and the impact of economic change and concludes that the early modern family is characterized by continuity, flexibility, and an ability to adapt to change.

stress the authority of the wife in the Protestant family.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile others have claimed that the elevation of marriage domesticated women, re-inscribing them within the household. The patriarchal ideal became a characteristic of the pious household as moral discipline and order were elevated to the status of religious values.<sup>12</sup> Some historians have debated the idea that early modern women were more pious than their male counterparts. Patricia Crawford believed that female religiosity was socially produced; devotion provided a means of self-expression which was denied them in other avenues of life.<sup>13</sup> Yet this approach sees domestic religion and women's religion as synonymous. Undoubtedly the home was a vital location for the practice of religion by women but domestic devotion involved all members of the household. Recent research has shown the importance and intensity of personal devotion for men as well as women. Furthermore, this approach perpetuates the idea that the domestic was unimportant. Other studies, meanwhile, have emphasised the wider religious influence women could exert through their piety.<sup>14</sup>

Casting a long and deep shadow on the historiographical landscape at the outset of this project was Christopher Hill's seminal chapter on the puritan 'spiritualized household'. Hill argued that puritan prescription and practice, by placing spiritual responsibility for the

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<sup>11</sup> Stephen Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled: Family life in Reformation Europe*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1983), 54, passim; Marc R. Forster and Benjamin J. Kaplan, *Piety and Family in Early Modern Europe*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), 1-3; Miriam Chrisman, "Family and Religion in Two Noble Families: French Catholic and English Puritan", *Journal of Family History*, 8, no 2 (1983): 190. Chrisman compares and contrasts the French, Catholic Family Chantal-Rabutin-Sevigne with the English, Puritan Verneys, suggesting that doctrinal differences explain the more reciprocal relationships between spouses and greater independence of the children in the Protestant family.

<sup>12</sup> Lyndal Roper, *The Holy household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 2-3, 252

<sup>13</sup> Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion in England, 1500-1720*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 1993), 74

<sup>14</sup> Jacqueline Eales, "Samuel Clarke and the "Lives" of Godly Women in Seventeenth-Century England", in D. Wood and W. Sheils (eds), *Women in the Church, Studies in Church History*, vol. 27 (1990), 365-76; Diane Willen, "Women and Religion in Early Modern England" in *Women in Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe*, ed. Sherrin Marshall. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 140-65; Diane Willen, "Godly Women in Early Modern England: Puritanism and Gender" *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 43 no 4, (1992), 561-580; Debra L. Parish, "The Power of Female Pietism: Women as Spiritual Authorities and Religious Role Models in Seventeenth-Century England", *Journal of Religious History*, 17, no 1 (1992): 33-46.

household with the male head through catechism and family prayers, amounted to a spiritualization of the household and the sacerdotalization of the father's role.<sup>15</sup> Hill's focus was on relations between servants and employers and their relative religious responsibilities. More recent scholarship has questioned Hill's strong association of Puritanism with these ideals. Margo Todd has located the origins of these attitudes to early sixteenth-century Christian humanism and stressed that Catholics and Anglicans also wrote about and practiced ideals concerning the importance of the married state, the religious duties of householders, and the education of children.<sup>16</sup> It is clear that religious duty suffused the relationships between members of the household and was implicated in the maintenance of social order. I will discuss the symbolic relationship between church, state, and household, showing why the religiously ordered household was of significance and relevance to church and state and how this changed throughout the seventeenth century.

I seek to move beyond Christopher Hill's spiritualised household, with its concern for religiously regulated relationships and social order, to ask what the pious household would have actually looked, sounded, and felt like. I move from abstract concept to concrete practice. I ask what the pious household actually did and how seventeenth century people practiced their religion in a domestic setting. My research explores domestic religion holistically, to consider a wide range of practices, to pin down the mechanics of how they worked and to understand the links between the different practices.

My overarching objective is to highlight and explore the complexity of domestic religion, a complexity that belies those lists and the image of domestic piety depicted in the

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<sup>15</sup> Hill, *Society and Puritanism*, 382-416

<sup>16</sup> Margo Todd, "Humanists, Puritans and the Spiritualized Household", *Church History*, 49, no 1, (1980): 18-34; Margo Todd, *Christian humanism and the Puritan Social Order*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 96-117

frontispiece of Lewis Bayly's *The Practise of Pietie*. At the outset of this research too little was known about the prescription and reality of most of the practices implicated in domestic religion; they were assumed, summarised, and simplified. I therefore aspired to paint a complete picture of domestic religion and its component practices. There have been important developments in the field over the last decade with the practices of domestic religion receiving greater attention from historians. Therefore I have concentrated instead on those practices which have not yet been explored by others in detail, the links between the practices, and wider themes.

The research which follows shows domestic religion to be a complex matrix of contiguous practices. Each component of domestic religion is presented in the prescriptive literature in relation to other practices, with each practice serving as necessary preparation for another in cyclical fashion. The practices are patterned and sequenced depending on factors including time of day, location, company, and occasion; as well as wider factors such as denominational tradition and prevailing political and religious atmosphere.

Domestic religion becomes even more complex when looking beyond prescription to the reality of lived experience in the seventeenth century. The relationship between prescription and lived experience is another primary research question. I explore how the prescriptions of the preachers and authors were internalised. How did seventeenth century lay people perform, adapt, or ignore them? I have addressed these questions of lived experience through archival case studies of families as well as in better known printed sources. I argue that prescriptive literature certainly influenced domestic religion as practiced. Yet the advice was adapted to reflect the reality of life in seventeenth century households, including social pressures, practical considerations, and personal religious choice. Where possible I explore the evolution of prescription and practice over time, hence the extended time period for

study. In particular I seek to relate prescriptive literature to contemporary religious and political events and trends. In the case of lived experience, definitive statements on change over time are challenging in the face of dispersed and limited evidence. Few archives or families offer consistent evidence over an extended period of time.

Domestic religion as the primary subject unites two largely separate areas of research: household or family religion, and the expression and practice of personal piety. Family religion has commanded the most attention from historians and the public implications of household religion were clear in the prescriptive literature. Yet focussing on household religion could potentially exclude a range of devotional practices. It became apparent that family religion and personal piety were intertwined in prescription and practice, and therefore the term 'domestic religion' has been adopted to encompass both elements. Domestic incorporates the bounded space of the house and the wider space of domestic activity including outdoors and modes of travel. Or as Jessica Martina and Alec Ryrie put it 'This is a book about how people in early modern England and Scotland prayed when they weren't in church'.<sup>17</sup> I pay close attention to the spaces and locations of devotional practices throughout. Domestic religion redefines devotional space in both its physical and emotional dimension. I argue that the practices of domestic religion often act to extend the domestic space beyond the conventional boundaries.

By defining the scope of my research to domestic space and seeking to situate religious practice within its spatial context, I engage with the literature on domestic architecture in the period. The architectural history of the period is dominated by the work of W.G. Hoskins who described it as a moment of flourishing building and rebuilding, and one of rapid

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<sup>17</sup> Jessica Martin and Alec Ryrie, "Introduction: Private and Domestic Devotion" in *Private and Domestic Devotion in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Jessica Martin and Alec Ryrie (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 1

change in form and appearance.<sup>18</sup> The work of Mark Girouard and Nicholas Cooper provided more detail concerning the development of interior spaces of the gentry house, and their use and function.<sup>19</sup> Annabel Ricketts focused her attention specifically on the Protestant gentry domestic chapel.<sup>20</sup> However, possessing a domestic chapel was the exception rather than the rule among my case study families. Post-Reformation it was no longer considered necessary to use dedicated space for religious devotions.

Tara Hamling's research examines the relationship between the religious activities of the household and the applied decoration of the domestic spaces they were performed in. Hamling is particularly interested in religious imagery in domestic decoration and how this fashioned and promoted godly identity, regulated thought and behaviour, and prompted pious meditation. Hamling takes a holistic approach to the idea of domestic religion and points the way to an investigation of religion in the home beyond overt displays of piety to its incorporation in the minutiae of daily life.<sup>21</sup> Hamling's work also reminds us of the materiality of piety and to consider the sources as objects as well as texts. Paying attention to the locatedness and materiality of domestic religion deepens the picture of lived experience. Hamling's focus on material evidence facilitates the inclusion of the 'middling sort' in the story of domestic life. My focus on archival evidence of lived experience means that largely this story is one of the domestic religion of those of high social status. The

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<sup>18</sup> Tara Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household: Religious Art in Post-Reformation Britain*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), 67

<sup>19</sup> Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978); Nicholas Cooper, *The Houses of the Gentry, 1480-1680*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999)

<sup>20</sup> Annabel Ricketts, *The English Country House Chapel: Building a Protestant Tradition*, (Reading: Spire Books, 2007). Domestic chapels and chaplains have often been of interest to historians, particularly historians of post-Restoration Puritanism and non-conformism. JT Cliffe included an appendix of post-Restoration Puritan Gentry families with domestic chaplains. JT Cliffe, *The Puritan Gentry Besieged, 1650-1700*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 1993), 206-228

<sup>21</sup> Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household*, passim



category gentry household is, however, not prescriptive in this research, and instead reflects the status of the main family archives I have drawn upon.<sup>22</sup>

The literature on public and private feeds into another theme of this research. The work of Lena Orlin Cowen has considered the physical reality of living in early modern spaces and concluded that seclusion or solitude was rare. Orlin cast doubt on previous research centred on the early modern closet by Alan Stewart and his assumptions about the desirability and value of privacy for early modern people. Erica Longfellow interpreted the dominance of research on the early modern closet as symptomatic of a desire to locate in this period the emergence of the modern 'self' and personal privacy.<sup>23</sup> Longfellow's work has been pivotal in recent historiography on the concepts of public and private. Her article 'Public, Private, and the Household in Early Seventeenth-Century England' moved the field beyond the rather obvious conclusion that 'public and private were connected and at times indistinguishable'. Longfellow questioned whether seventeenth century individuals had concepts resembling our notions of public and private and what those terms would have meant for them. Crucially Longfellow asked whether 'public and private can be used as an analytical tool when considering texts of this period?'<sup>24</sup> This latter question can also be asked of religion and devotional practice. Longfellow questioned the use of 'privacy as a valued right' and 'private family life as separate from public political debate' life as concepts in early modern historical analysis of the household. In this discussion, Longfellow frequently returned to the linkages between public and private prayer.<sup>25</sup> The blurred boundaries and shifting concepts of public and private are a key unifying theme of the

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<sup>22</sup> Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household*, 289-290 n25

<sup>23</sup> Erica Longfellow, "Public, Private, and the Household in Early Seventeenth-Century England", *Journal of British Studies*, 45, no 2, (2006): 316

<sup>24</sup> Longfellow, "Public, Private, and the Household", 312-3

<sup>25</sup> Longfellow, "Public, Private, and the Household", 321

essays in *Private and Domestic Devotion in Early Modern England*. As the Editors note in their introduction 'the privacy of 'private devotion' is a moot point'.<sup>26</sup>

My research highlights the myriad complex yet concrete connections between public and private, or domestic, worship. I argue that drawing a clear distinction between public and private religion is misleading. While ostensibly private, the practices of domestic religion were of public significance. Domestic religion is implicated in significant debates in religio-politics. Some aspects of domestic religious expression were of interest to the wider church and state. The boundaries of domestic religion are incredibly fluid - in terms of people, space, and the practices themselves. Public, family, and personal practices were enmeshed in a matrix of devotions that are hard to disentangle. I highlight the connections and relationships between public and domestic practices as well as between devotions. Private as a term is too loaded with meaning by historians to be useful in the context of seventeenth century religion; I prefer 'family' or 'household' religion for communal devotions, and 'personal' or 'individual' piety.<sup>27</sup> This careful use of terms can help to avoid the preconceptions evoked by twenty-first century notions of privacy; which was rarely sought and even more rarely achieved in the seventeenth century.

Linked to the wider topic of public and private is a theme questioning the supposed interiorised nature of Protestant, and more particularly puritan, piety. The Weberian thesis linking Puritanism, 'the spirit of capitalism' and other cultural developments seen as vital on the road to modernity has had surprising longevity.<sup>28</sup> Scholars have discerned a supposed rise of individualism in this period and linked it to a characterization of Protestantism, and

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<sup>26</sup> Martin and Ryrle, "Introduction: Private and Domestic Devotion", 4

<sup>27</sup> These terms are discussed fully below, 76-7.

<sup>28</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, (Norton Critical Editions, 2009)

Puritanism in particular, as a religion of private interiorised religiosity.<sup>29</sup> In this reading the interior piety at the heart of Puritanism equates to the birth of privacy and individualism. Historians have challenged this; most notable in taking it to task is Andrew Cambers' work on self-writing and pious reading which highlights the public, collective and social modes of devotional practice.<sup>30</sup> Cambers wrote 'Godly religious culture emerges...as a culture forged through the intersections of the public and the private and of the individual and the communal'. Cambers draws on significant earlier work by Tom Webster about the sociability of early seventeenth century Puritans.<sup>31</sup> My research picks up this thread and highlights elements of sociability in domestic religion. Even the most seemingly individual practices connected to the wider community within and beyond the household. I will also show that even those practices traditionally thought of as solitary may indeed not have been.

No study on seventeenth century religious culture can ignore the debates surrounding the meaning of Puritanism and its counterparts. Past approaches to Puritanism have taken variably political, ecclesiological, and doctrinal positions. Work in this area has largely sought to determine the extent to which Puritans were a separate grouping outside, inside, or overlapping with the established church. The conclusion of Peter Lake, and fellow historians, is that the Puritans were a distinct group operating within, but not simply a subset of, the established church who encompassed a range of positions.<sup>32</sup> Many of the studies

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<sup>29</sup> Cecile M. Jagodzinski, *Privacy and Print: Reading and Writing in Seventeenth-Century England*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999); Hill, *Society and Puritanism*, for example. Discussion in Peter Lake, "The historiography of Puritanism" in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* ed. John Coffey and Paul C.H. Lim, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 346-71.

<sup>30</sup> Andrew Cambers, *Godly Reading: Print, Manuscript and Puritanism in England, 1580-1720*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 15-16; Andrew Cambers, "Reading, the Godly and Self-Writing in England, circa 1580-1720", *Journal of British Studies*, 46, no 4, (2007): 796-825

<sup>31</sup> Tom Webster, "Writing to redundancy: approaches to spiritual journals and early modern spirituality", *The Historical Journal*, 39, no 1, (1996): 33-56; Tom Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England: The Caroline Puritan Movement, C.1620-1643*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997)

<sup>32</sup> Andrew Cambers surveys the historiography succinctly in the section "Defining Puritanism and Godly Culture" in Cambers, *Godly Reading*, 10-16; also, Lake "The historiography of Puritanism", 346-371

in this field focus on, and their conclusions only ring true for, the fifteen years or so either side of 1620. 'Puritan' becomes an even more problematic term when used in relation to the later seventeenth century.

A more helpful approach is to view Puritanism as a religious culture. In this way Puritanism is defined and Puritans identified through shared religious practices. Peter Lake has labelled this package of practices, including travelling to sermons, fasting, and self-examination as a puritan style of piety.<sup>33</sup> This concept is useful in that it acknowledges that each of the practices might be present to a lesser or greater degree. Viewing Puritanism as a religious culture is also valuable when making links between the early and later seventeenth century. Andrew Cambers has highlighted the disjuncture between historiographies of the early seventeenth century, war and interregnum, and post-restoration.<sup>34</sup> A definition of 'Puritan' based on religious cultural practices allows it to survive as a meaningful term of analysis through to the end of the seventeenth century. Throughout this thesis I have used 'godly' or 'puritan' interchangeably as an adjective rather than as a noun. The individuals or families labelled thus performed a puritan style of piety and may have held a range of theological and ecclesiological positions. An equally fraught historiography besets the terms 'conformist', 'Arminian', 'Laudian' and 'Anglican'.<sup>35</sup> For Church of England loyalists I have generally opted for 'conformist' until, and 'Anglican' after, the Restoration. 'Arminian' and 'Laudian' have been used where the context makes that appropriate.

Many lines have been written on the definitions of puritan, Puritanism, non-conformist, conformist, Laudian, Anglican, and 'Prayer-book Protestants'. One of the reasons for this,

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<sup>33</sup> Cambers, *Godly Reading*, 12-14

<sup>34</sup> Cambers, *Godly Reading*, 8

<sup>35</sup> Judith Maltby, *Prayer Book and People in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1-18

argued Alec Ryrie, is the focus of previous generations of historians on doctrine, liturgy and public worship. But 'when we look at the lived experience of religion in this period, the supposed distinction between puritan and conformist dissolves into a blurred spectrum in which even the extremes do not differ too starkly from one another'.<sup>36</sup> The term 'The Godly' much in favour with recent historians is rejected by Ryrie in favour of earnestness, defined as genuine engagement with religion that is not exclusive to or narrowly defined to Puritanism. This rightly acknowledges that it was not only Puritans who were emotionally and intellectually connected to their religion and that domestic religion was a culture largely shared across the mainstream Protestant spectrum. Domestic religion was practiced in households of a variety of different religious shades. Yet how do we understand the impression given by the surviving sources which come overwhelmingly from more puritan individuals and families? My research suggests the puritan distinction is not simply one of 'earnestness', but also of centrality and reflectiveness. Firstly, for those who hoped the Church would undergo further reform, domestic religion became relatively more important compared to those who were emotionally satisfied with parish worship. The home provided a venue for the expression of piety unfulfilled in the parish church. Secondly, seventeenth century Protestants with puritan tendencies were more reflective about their domestic religious arrangements and more concerned to record and analyse their activities.

One criticism of Alec Ryrie's recent monograph is that it down plays the divisions in early modern Protestantism and conflates people with very different styles of religion into an amorphous Protestant category. As we will see, superficially much of the content of domestic religion was uncontroversial; yet those points of contention which did exist touched nerves which went to the heart of religious politics and culture in the seventeenth

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<sup>36</sup> Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 6

century. It is these pulse points which demonstrate clearly how significant and important domestic religion actually was. There were also subtle 'shades of difference' in the devotions of different types of households. Although less dramatic these are also significant for a full investigation of domestic religion, its variety, continuities, and changes.

Another significant corpus of literature feeding into domestic religion is the history of the book, literacy, and reading as well as work on writing and self-writing in the early modern period. These subjects attract literary and historical scholars in equal measure. The connections literary scholars make to early modern religious practice are usually mediated by texts; which are their primary subject of investigation. For historians those same texts are evidence of an activity or a source to mine for details relating to biography, belief, or behaviour. Much is made of Protestantism being a religion of the word and book; until recently, however, few scholars made explicit the connection between reading and writing, and domestic religious practice.

The history of the book and reading is vast yet until recently there has been little attention paid to devotional reading, or reading as a domestic practice.<sup>37</sup> Perhaps this reflects the literary roots of many researching in this space.<sup>38</sup> Individual religious books and genres do have their studies: the Bible and Fox's *Actes and Monuments*, for instance, and Ian Green's monumental monograph on Protestant publishing has given invaluable detail on the most popular devotional books of the period.<sup>39</sup> The field has been enhanced by recent important studies of religious reading. Andrew Cambers explored devotional reading in a variety of

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<sup>37</sup> Cambers, *Godly Reading*, 26; Heidi Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender, and Literacy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 28. Brayman Hackel also provides a useful summary of historiographical approaches to reading although, as Cambers points out, Brayman Hackel specifically excludes the Bible and devotional reading from her study.

<sup>38</sup> Heidi Brayman Hackel wrote about being struck by the sheer volume of sermons, handbooks and pamphlets which 'are mere footnotes to our literary canon' in the stacks of the Huntingdon library. Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material*, 14

<sup>39</sup> Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

spatial contexts reconstructing the ways the Godly read and used their books. Cambers concluded that reading was the crucial strand of puritan piety and that godly reading intersected with and mediated other practices of godly religiosity.<sup>40</sup> Alec Ryrie has synthesised this literature and made a strong case for the role of reading in Protestant piety.<sup>41</sup> Ryrie wrote of the intellectualism of early Protestantism and the centrality of learning and knowledge to Protestant faith. In Bayly's *The Practise of Pietie* for instance the knowledge of God was prioritised over service to God.<sup>42</sup> Ryrie focussed specifically on the relatively well worn ground of reading the Bible and the continued use by Protestants of Catholic devotional materials.

As will be seen, I largely agree with Cambers and Ryrie about the central role of reading in domestic religion. However, I emphasise reading as an activity rather than a standalone devotional practice and to do this I situate reading within the context of the other practices of domestic religion. I particularly seek out instances where reading is used to perform other practices. I also integrate a consideration of reading and writing as religious practices. The study of early modern writing has been largely shaped by the concerns of literary scholars, for example genre, authorship, and audience. This work has highlighted important examples of devotional writing and made them available to a wider audience. However, writing practices of ordinary people, especially when those texts no longer survive, have rarely been considered. Only recently has the role of writing in devotion been recognised and it has been a particular concern throughout this research. In 2013 Kate Narveson explored the process by which Bible reading practices, such as note taking, developed into a vibrant culture of lay devotional writing including prayers and meditations, homilies, doctrinal

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<sup>40</sup> Cambers, *Godly Reading*, 6-9

<sup>41</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 259-297

<sup>42</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 261-5

excurses, letters of admonition and encouragement, and accounts of passage in their lives. Bible reading gave them the motivation and skills to engage in devotional writing, and devotional writing gave lay people a new power to shape their identity in relation to the wider community.<sup>43</sup> Femke Molekamp simultaneously took a similar approach but focussed particularly on women readers and writers.<sup>44</sup> As with reading, I am particularly interested in examples of writing to perform other domestic devotional activities and duties. Along with reading, writing plays a key linking role between domestic religious practices and between domestic and public devotion.

There are a wide variety of textual genres which have fed into the literature on seventeenth century piety, including poetry, spiritual diaries and autobiographies, meditations, and commonplace books. Many of these were once seen as uncomplicated sources for the experience of being a Protestant or Puritan.<sup>45</sup> Scholars such as Margo Todd and Tom Webster called attention to the construction of identity or 'self-fashioning' that happened within 'self-writing', the 'meta-genre' applied to many of these genres. Much of this research has taken as self-evident the interiorised nature of Protestant piety displayed in this writing. But some more recent work, particularly on women's writing, has drawn out the public aspects of self-writing and some historians have examined the role of self-writing in devotion and wider religious culture.<sup>46</sup> As discussed I challenge the supposed interiorised

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<sup>43</sup> Kate Narveson, *Bible Readers and Lay Writers in Early Modern England*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 1-16

<sup>44</sup> Femke Molekamp, *Women and the Bible in Early Modern England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

<sup>45</sup> Paul Delany, *British Autobiography in the Seventeenth Century*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 1969); Owen C Watkins, *The Puritan Experience: Studies in Spiritual Autobiography*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1972)

<sup>46</sup> Sheila Ottway, "They Only Lived Twice: Public and Private Selfhood in the Autobiographies of Anne, Lady Halkett and Colonel Joseph Bampfild", and Ramona Wray, "[Re]Constructing the Past: The Diametric Lives of Mary Rich", both in *Betraying Our Selves: Forms of Self-Representation in Early Modern English Texts*, ed. Henk Dragstra, Sheila Ottway and Helen Wilcox (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 136-47 and 148-65, respectively; Ramona Wray, "Recovering the Reading of Renaissance Englishwomen: Deployments of Autobiography", *Critical Survey*, 12, no 2, (2000): 33-48; Elizabeth Clarke, "Elizabeth Jekyll's Spiritual Diary: Private Manuscript or Political Document?" in *Writings by Early Modern Women - English Manuscript*



nature of godly piety and self-fashioning and identity is important to this. I approach identity from the collective perspective of the family, arguing for the important role that written material produced as part of domestic religion played in the construction and promotion of family identity.

One other strand of secondary literature feeding into domestic religion is a disparate group of studies concerning the piety of individuals, groups of individuals or families. Sometimes taken as an ideal type for a wider descriptive label, such as puritan, these studies offer valuable archival, methodological, and comparative insights. Depending on date and disciplinary background of the author these studies might define piety as variously theological and religious beliefs, ecclesiological positions, their reading or writing, chapels and chaplains, devotional networks, education, and more rarely detailed exploration of domestic religion conceived as actual devotional practices.<sup>47</sup> For example, Sue Petrie's study

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*Studies, 1100–1700 volume 9*, ed. Peter Beal and Margaret J. M. Ezell (London: The British Library Publishing Division, 2000), 218–37; Retha M. Warnicke, “Lady Mildmay's Journal: A Study in Autobiography and Meditation in Reformation England”, *Sixteenth-Century Journal*, 20, no 1 (1989): 55; Cambers, “Reading, the Godly and the Self”, 797–9, 801

<sup>47</sup> Pauline Croft, “The Religion of Robert Cecil”, *The Historical Journal*, 34, no 4, (1991), 773–796; Claire Cross, *The Puritan Earl: The Life of Henry Hastings Third Earl of Huntingdon*, (London: Macmillan, 1966); Jacqueline Eales, “An Ancient Mother in our Israel: Mary, Lady Vere” in *The Intellectual Culture of Puritan Women, 1558–1680*, ed. Johanna Harris and Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 84–95; Laura Branch, “Practical Piety: The Spiritual Autobiography of Rose Throckmorton (c.1526–1613)”, *University of St. Andres M.Litt dissertation* (2007); Andrew Cambers, “Readers' Marks and Religious Practice: Margaret Hoby's Marginalia” in *Tudor Books and Readers: Materiality and the Construction of Meaning*, ed. John N. King, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 211–31; Danielle Clarke, “The Countess of Pembroke and the Practice of Piety” in *The Intellectual Culture of Puritan Women, 1558–1680*, ed. Johanna Harris and Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 28–41; Patricia Crawford, “Katharine and Philip Henry and their children: a case study in family ideology” in *Blood, Bodies and Families in Early Modern England*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), 175–81; V. M. Larminie, “The Godly Magistrate: The Private Philosophy and Public Life of Sir John Newdigate 1571–1610”, *Dugdale Society Occasional Papers no.82* (Stratford-upon-Avon: Dugdale Society, 1982); Christine M Newman, “‘An Honourable and Elect Lady’: The Faith of Isabel, Lady Bowes”, *Studies in Church History. Subsidia*, 12, (1999): 407–419; Annabel Ricketts, Claire Gapper and Caroline Knight, “Designing for Protestant Worship: the Private Chapels of the Cecil Family” in *Defining the Holy: Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Andrew Spicer and Sarah Hamilton, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 115–36; Jason Scott-Warren, “Books in the bedchamber: religion, accounting and the library of Richard Stonley” in *Tudor Books and Readers: Materiality and the Construction of Meaning*, ed. John N. King, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 232–52; David L. Smith, “Catholic, Anglican or Puritan? Edward Sackville, Fourth Earl of Dorset and the Ambiguities of Religion in Early Stuart England”, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 2, (1992), 105–24; Margo Todd, “Puritan Self-Fashioning: The Diary of Samuel Ward”, *Journal of British*

of the piety of the anachronistically labelled Anglican Sir Roger Twysden runs almost the full gamut of these approaches except the final one.<sup>48</sup> The wide variety of approaches show the fluid meanings of the term piety. Piety is also sometimes used to express the intensity or fervour of religious belief. Jerald Brauer wrote of piety as 'essential religiousness which underlies all religious obedience, actions, and virtues'.<sup>49</sup> Many of the works referenced have been vital in defining the scope of my research. Yet I have avoided piety as the framework due to its imprecise definition. My research focuses on practices and actions through which piety is expressed in the domestic setting. Theology and belief become important in this research when they impact on devotional behaviour and action.

Despite the wide variety of fields feeding into domestic religion it remains the case that it has been 'left remarkably underexplored'. Jessica Martin and Alec Ryrie suggest that this is because the ground upon which this research is based 'is shifting and hard to see. The conditions which allowed private devotion its eclectic and fluid forms are those which make record a slippery tool'.<sup>50</sup> The interdisciplinary contributions to their edited collection offer insights into as many different facets of domestic religion as possible. Jane Dawson's chapter offers a helpful framework for the study of domestic religion. She divided devotion into the public, the domestic, and the private and asked the basic questions of 'what', 'where', 'when', and 'who' of worship. The answers suggest 'a spectrum running from public through domestic to private with these spheres frequently overlapping or merging'.<sup>51</sup> The other contributions to the volume are exciting and insightful and will be drawn upon throughout

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*Studies*, 31, no 3, (1992): 236-64; G. S. S. Yule, "The Puritan Piety of Members of the Long Parliament", *Studies in Church History*, 8, (1972): 187-94; Paul Seaver, *Wallington's World: A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-Century London*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985)

<sup>48</sup> Sue Petrie, "The Religion of Sir Roger Twysden (1597-1672): A Case Study in Gentry Piety in Seventeenth Century England", *Archaeological Cantia*, 124, (2004): 137-62

<sup>49</sup> Jerald C. Brauer, "Types of Puritan Piety", *Church History*, 56, no 1 (1987), 39-58. 39.

<sup>50</sup> Martin, Ryrie, "Introduction: Private and Domestic Devotion", 7

<sup>51</sup> Jane Dawson "Hamely with God: A Scottish View on Domestic Devotion" in *Private and Domestic Devotion in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Jessica Martin and Alec Ryrie (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 35

the below chapters. However, each contribution takes a narrow lens on particular aspects of domestic religion and there is yet little drawing out a nuanced and holistic vision of domestic religion in one place.

Already mentioned several times, Alec Ryrie's recent work *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* will undoubtedly stand as a milestone in the study of early modern religious practice. Ambitious in its scope, Ryrie's book asked two questions: how did early modern Protestants live their religion? and 'what meaning did they find in those actions?'<sup>52</sup> To answer Ryrie covered the full range of experience from the emotions, prayer, reading and writing, household devotion, and public worship to a consideration of life-course. Published in 2013 when the writing was in full swing Ryrie's book prompted a rebalancing of this thesis. Ryrie's study, along with other recent research, has fulfilled my original objective to make the case for domestic religion as an area of early modern life worthy of greater focus. One thing that persisted in Ryrie's research, and is also seen in Ian Green's chapter on domestic devotion, is a concentration on prayer practices.<sup>53</sup> Consequently this study gives greater space to other family and personal practices. I also integrate prayer into the cycle of devotion and explore its relationships with other religious practices. For this reason family prayer is considered alongside other communal practices while personal prayer is explored with other individual practices. The complexity and contiguous nature of domestic religion will be laid bare.

## Structure

Chapter two sets the scene for what follows with an exploration of the 'why' of family religion. Scholars have long highlighted the relationship between family, church, and state

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<sup>52</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 2

<sup>53</sup> Ian Green, "Varieties of domestic devotion in early modern English Protestantism" in *Private and Domestic Devotion in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Jessica Martin and Alec Ryrie (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 9-31

and conceived of the ordered pious household as a microcosm of the ideal Church and state. Historians usually closely identify such theories with a particular denominational grouping, in the manner of Hill's spiritualised puritan household. Conversely historians have also generalised about family religion; treating the seventeenth century, and the early modern period more broadly, as amorphous and not fully contextualising the advice of prescriptive writers in terms of chronology and denomination. The chapter weaves two narratives, one on the prevailing religious and political context as background for the second on major developments in the prescriptive theory of family religion. The narrative is largely confined to mainstream Protestantism, the Calvinist, moderate non-conformist, puritan, or godly strand and the conformist or Anglican strand. The chapter demonstrates a high degree of consensus regarding family religious theory across the religious spectrum and throughout the century. However, the turbulent course of political and religious events gave family religion greater significance over time, increasing the stakes and highlighting the differences and nuances in viewpoints.

Chapter three explores the mechanics of family devotional practices; the who, what, when, where, and how of family religion. The chapter begins with family prayer and moves on to other communal domestic practices of psalm singing, catechising, and sermon repetition. For each practice, I look at the guidance given by prescriptive authors and the reality of lived experience as revealed in archival and printed sources. Three significant themes emerge from the chapter. Firstly, the relationship between prescription and reality. Secondly, the interwoven and complex nature of family prayer. The component practices link together in complex chains and link, in many places, with public and personal devotions. Finally, household religion proves to be key to the formation of family identity. I

argue that family religion played a part in constructing, expressing, and projecting family identity.

Chapter four moves from communal to individual, family to personal and explores personal devotions in the domestic setting. The chapter begins with individual prayer practices and moves onto meditation and self-examination, both surprisingly ill served by historians. I keep the practices, rather than the literary genres, firmly in mind. Thematically, the chapter will further unpick notions of privacy by problematising the identification of personal and individual devotions with privacy and solitude. Recent work by Webster and Cambers has highlighted the social nature of godly religious culture through a focus on communal practices such as godly conference and reading.<sup>54</sup> This chapter engages with debates about the interiorised or sociable nature of godly religious culture through individual and personal practices.

In chapter five reading and writing are considered together. Unlike the practices covered in earlier chapters reading and writing are not intrinsically devotional; there are many forms of reading and writing which bore little relation to religion. Reading's place as a key devotional practice could hardly be doubted given the central place of the Bible in Protestantism. Until recently though writing has not been afforded as much attention. The chapter will consider reading and writing practices which are devotional on their own account; where the writing or reading is the devotional practice. Important to the chapter, however, is a focus on reading and writing practices which enabled devotional practices or linked them together. The link between reading and writing and an interpretation of Protestant piety as interiorised is strong in the historiography. I therefore continue a theme of the previous chapter to demonstrate the sociability of godly religious culture through reading and writing practices.

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<sup>54</sup> Webster, *Godly Clergy in Early Stuart England*, passim; Cambers, *Godly Reading*, passim

To conclude this chapter, I argue that letter writing had a significant place in domestic religion.

Chapters three to five explore aspects of ordinary domestic religion. That is, the expression of devotion through a regular, daily pattern of religious practices. The ordinary practices outlined in these chapter are the basic building blocks of domestic religion. In the final two chapters I look at aspects of extraordinary domestic religion, which was the special, enhanced or extended expression of piety often in response to particular events. On these occasions the basic building blocks of domestic religion were brought together in different patterns, spaces and company.

In chapter six I explore the Lord's Supper and days of humiliation and fasting. Historians have tended to characterise godly and puritan public worship as sermon based and conformist, Laudian or Anglican public religion as dominated by the sacrament of the Lord's supper. Viewing the Lord's supper from the perspective of domestic religion my research suggests the Lord's Supper and preparation for it were a significant component of godly piety. Days of humiliation and thanksgiving combined the building blocks of domestic religion into a unique pattern to achieve a specific aim. They brought together most of the domestic devotional practices already discussed with the practice of fasting. The analysis of the lived experience of fasting is rich due to its popularity with my case study families. In this chapter, we see clearly the translation of prescription to practice and I argue that prescription represented an ideal which was in practice negotiated and mediated by practical considerations. It is notable that accessing lived experience for extraordinary domestic religion is typically easier than for ordinary practices. This may be because the extraordinary nature of those devotions provoked more comment and reflection in correspondence and personal writing.

Chapter seven considers the ultimate extraordinary event in domestic religion: the experience of illness and death. I argue that the sick bed was a domestic but not private place and illness and death often took on a very public nature. The death bed was the last chapter of a life and that conferred upon it a particular religious significance. The chapter considers the effects sickness and death had on the domestic religion of the household and the devotional activity performed by the sick or dying and their attendants. The chapter also looks briefly at grief, consolation, and memorialisation; and its interplay with domestic religion.

### **Methods and sources**

The technique of layering evidence from a variety of sources to build up a picture and support a narrative is now mainstream. I have adopted this methodology through necessity. The evidence for domestic religion – particularly for lived experience – is scarce, impressionistic, diverse, and dispersed. Writing about her research in early modern reading Heidi Brayman Hackel summed up the challenge: 'my project rests on many hints of evidence that, together, provide a glimpse of early modern reading'.<sup>55</sup> Brayman Hackel's description of embarking on her research is analogous to my experience.

'I resolved to "wander through the archives" for a while, looking for and following the evidence. To begin with a particular genre or class of readers, I believed, would be to import later assumptions about literature and culture back into the period and so perhaps obscure the very readers I hoped to find. Too little was known in general about reading practices in early modern England to begin with such limitation'.

At the outset of my research the same could be said for domestic religion. Despite its paucity, the evidence is also potentially limitless in the archives. I therefore opted to

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<sup>55</sup> Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material*, 13

concentrate on a small group of seventeenth century families whose archives seemed likely to contain relevant material.

The structure of each chapter has been to identify major trends in the instruction and guidance regarding domestic religion transmitted to early modern lay people through the prescriptive literature largely penned by clerics. I then explore the lived experience of early modern domestic religion through the accumulation of evidence from a wide variety of sources. I build up a picture of domestic religion in the households of my case study families. These impressions are supported with well or lesser known sources available in printed editions.

For seventeenth century prescriptive literature Early English Books Online (EEBO) is an invaluable finding aid. I have utilised general devotional manuals and texts dealing with specific elements of domestic religion and these span the century and the religious spectrum. Some works are by well known authors, whose fame made them figures of authority. I have also used lesser known authors, or at least less well known to historians, whose work captured a particular topic or moment. Contemporary renown has not always translated to fame among historians. Samuel Slater was the author of two works on prayer and family religion published in the 1690s. While relatively unknown among historians, Slater was a leading London non-conformist whose works ‘sold extraordinarily well’.<sup>56</sup> Some of the works I have explored appeared in many editions throughout the century and may be considered particularly influential.<sup>57</sup> Other works may have been in print only once;

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<sup>56</sup> Jim Benedict, “Slater, Samuel (1629?–1704)” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, Jan 2008, accessed 13 Nov 2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25717>

<sup>57</sup> Ian Green's work on Protestant publishing *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* identified the best and steady selling Protestant books published before 1640. His methodology involves identifying the works which appeared in 5 or more editions in a twenty year period. This has been subject to criticism for



however this may be due to religious and political circumstance rather than lack of interest.<sup>58</sup> Each work is mentioned in its context of composition, reception and influence the first time it is referenced.

Another criteria for selection was a connection to one of my archival case study families. It may have been written by one of their clerical connections or they may have owned the book. Contemporary book inventories are extant for some of the families and individuals featured and have been reconstructed for others.<sup>59</sup> Specific texts also feature fairly frequently in correspondence. Making these connections adds an extra dimension to the interplay between prescription and reality. In these specific cases one can make more complex and nuanced assertions about the reception and interpretation of prescriptive literature.

An important, yet problematic, group of sources straddles the worlds of prescription and lived experience. Godly lives and funeral sermons have featured heavily in some accounts of seventeenth century religion and some scholars have deployed details from godly lives and funeral sermons in an unselfconscious and literal manner.<sup>60</sup> However these texts are far from straightforward accounts of pious lives. Discussing Samuel Clark's hagiographical works in particular, Patrick Collinson highlighted the purposes for which exemplary lives

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emphasising the consensual and non-controversial but, as Alec Ryrie pointed out, scholars have not been deterred from the Polemical. Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 10.

<sup>58</sup> Ian Green and Kate Peters "Religious Publishing in England 1640-1695" in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Volume IV, 1557-1695*, ed. John Barnard, D. F. McKenzie, and Maureen Bell, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 67-93. Green and Peters have highlighted how few books from the interregnum period appeared in later editions.

<sup>59</sup> A. G. Watson, *The Library of Sir Simonds D'Ewes*, (London: British Museum, 1966); Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, Gell of Hopton Hall, D258/72, Catalogue of the Library at Hopton Hall

<sup>60</sup> For instance, J T Cliffe relies heavily on godly lives and funeral sermons. Anthony Fletcher takes the funeral sermon as an entry way into their mental world and spiritual experience without considering the ways it was interpreted by men through the sermon. Anthony Fletcher "Beyond the Church: Women's Spiritual Experience at Home and in the Community 1600-1900", *Studies in Church History*, 34, (1998), 190-1

were published: theological, polemical, and practical.<sup>61</sup> For Collinson, the classical and Aristotelian modes of discourse conventional in biography pervade the lives rendering them at best 'tangential evidence of the spiritual experience, and religious attitudes of their subjects'.<sup>62</sup> What Collinson's article draws attention to is the conventions of genre which restrain the portrayal of the authentic life and the prescriptive nature of hagiographical lives.

This, however, does not mean that godly lives cannot be useful sources. Peter Lake writes that once the conventions of genre and the intentions and attitudes of the author are established an 'against the grain' reading becomes possible. Lake gives an example of such usage in his article exploring the personal godliness of Mrs Jane Ratcliffe in her life published by John Ley. The funeral sermons and godly lives of such exemplary individuals were, Lake suggests, written to extend their edifying influence beyond the grave.<sup>63</sup> We should not forget the polemical value of godly lives. John Ley admitted one of his objectives in publishing the life of Jane Ratcliffe was to gainsay Catholic and Brownist critique that the Church of England lacked piety and godliness. In addition, Lake discerns a tendency to emphasise the order and moderation of Ratcliffe's piety and behaviour, a riposte to claims that puritan zeal was incompatible with conformity to the national church.<sup>64</sup> Context is key with this literature and it is important to take note of the date of publication in relation to the death of the individual. Both John Ley's life of Jane Ratcliffe and William Hinde's life of John Bruen were published several years after their deaths at a time when puritan writers were interested in emphasising the order and moderation inherent in the life of puritan piety.

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<sup>61</sup> Patrick Collinson, "'A Magazine of Religious Patterns': An Erasmian Topic Transposed in English Protestantism" in *Godly People*, (London: Hambledon Press, 1983), 510

<sup>62</sup> Peter Lake's interpretation of Collinson's conclusion. Peter Lake, "Feminine Piety and Personal Potency: The 'Emancipation' of Mrs Jane Ratcliffe", *Seventeenth Century*, 2, no 2, (1987): 143-165

<sup>63</sup> Lake, "Feminine Piety and Personal Potency", 143-165

<sup>64</sup> Lake, "Feminine Piety and Personal Potency", 146

In the case of funeral sermons the image presented of the deceased had to be recognisable. Otherwise, the sermon would not have comforted grieving relatives or fulfilled its didactic purpose. As Peter Lake argued, the 'rationale behind funeral sermons...lay in there being a basic fit or congruence between the image produced in the pulpit and the recollections of the auditory who had known the subject in life....Idealized such portraits might be, but they had also to be recognizable'. Eric Josef Carlson asserted that funeral sermons can be 'fruitful, revealing and trustworthy sources for studying the behaviors and practices of some segments of English society'.<sup>65</sup> Carlson made his case through an exploration of the pious practices in the funeral sermons of women published before 1640. He highlighted examples of 'particular and distinctive practices which clearly differentiate one woman from another' in his selection of funeral sermons.<sup>66</sup>

Once delivered the afterlife of the funeral sermon slowly took it further from reality and closer to the prescriptive literature. Jacqueline Eales' comments on the versions of the life of Margaret Baxter, wife of non-conformist luminary Richard Baxter, demonstrate this process. Baxter's *Life* of his wife included unorthodox views on marriage and its effect on his work and vignettes where we can see Margaret using her personal piety to exert control over her husband's actions. When editing this life Samuel Clarke omitted and glossed over these aspects of the Baxter marriage to serve his own vision of marriage and the supportive role of the clerical wife.<sup>67</sup> Eales' conclusion was that while lives cannot be used as simple factual accounts they do 'provide a framework within which ideal and reality can be sifted

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<sup>65</sup> Eric Josef Carlson, "English Funeral Sermons as Sources: The Example of Female Piety in Pre-1640 Sermons", *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 32, No. 4, (2000): 568. Carlson also provides a helpful short summary of the development of the early modern funeral sermon and its place in religious culture on page 569-577. He includes an appendix of the printed English funeral sermons with biographical material for non-royal women up to 1640 on page 594.

<sup>66</sup> Carlson, "English Funeral Sermons as Sources", 581

<sup>67</sup> Jacqueline Eales, "Samuel Clarke and the 'Lives' of Godly Women in seventeenth-century England", *Studies in Church History*, 27, (1990): 373

and compared'. She advocates a step back to the sources used in constructing lives.<sup>68</sup> The prefaces of published funeral sermons and godly lives are particularly useful. Through the prefatory material authors make their intentions clear, address themselves to the deceased's family or share more biographical detail. The fragmented evidence for the lived experience of domestic religion means the insights afforded in the godly lives and funeral sermons cannot be ignored and can indeed become even more enlightening with a keen awareness of their issues.

To document and explore the lived experience of domestic religion I turn to a mix of archival and well or lesser known printed editions of a diverse set of documents. The sources include spiritual diaries, autobiographies, commonplace books, sermon notes, devotional writing of prayers, poetry, and memoirs and letters. In the archives there is an overwhelming mass of miscellaneous religious or devotional writing which is hard to identify and classify. This miscellaneous material of a religious nature can not only be revealing but is also a reminder of the possibility that we have failed to identify other forms and recognise patterns of behaviour and belief producing that material. These documents are simultaneously sources revealing details about domestic religion and material evidence of the activities themselves. An illustrative example is the diary of Lady Margaret Hoby.<sup>69</sup> The diary reveals details of domestic religion in the Hoby household, from prayers to psalm singing to reading. The diary itself is also the material evidence of Lady Hoby's practice of keeping a spiritual diary. This illustrates the complexity of working with sources for lived experience of domestic religion.

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<sup>68</sup> Eales, "Samuel Clarke and the 'Lives' of Godly Women", 375

<sup>69</sup> Joanna Moody, *The Private Life of an Elizabethan Lady: The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby, 1599-1605*, (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1998). Hereafter references to the diary itself given as *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*.

Each of the groups of sources mentioned above have their own, often extensive, historiography. Spiritual diaries and autobiographies have long attracted attention from literary scholars and historians hoping for access to the inner thoughts of early modern people.<sup>70</sup> The historiographical trend has been the meta-genre of self-writing. Incorporating diaries, autobiographies, meditations, commonplace books and others, this diverse literature is seen as having the overt or unacknowledged purpose of crafting and presenting an identity.<sup>71</sup> Recognising the influence of the conventions of genre or of commonly held contemporary notions does not mean such self-writing cannot reliably reveal details of domestic religion. This material was of course an exercise in domestic devotion itself. Many historians are frustrated by the aforementioned Lady Hoby's diary labelling it 'terse and impersonal' as they hope to access inner thoughts and feelings.<sup>72</sup> However as I have focussed on domestic devotional practices and the links between them Lady Hoby's diary, with its curt yet detailed and consistent summary of each day, has been invaluable.

Critical for this project is the archival correspondence collections of the case study families. These letters reveal details of domestic religion, often incidental to the primary purpose of the correspondence. Letters and letter collections are an importance subject of enquiry for literary scholars of the period and increasingly letters are being recognised as literary production worthy of study. Consequently the study of women's letters has been particularly rich in the last two decades as the definitions of genre and authorship blur.<sup>73</sup> I draw on this literature fully when I discuss letter writing as a domestic religious practice itself. The letters of the women of the Harley and Gell families in particular are crucial to this research.

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<sup>70</sup> For example: Watkins, *The Puritan Experience*, passim

<sup>71</sup> Self-writing and self-fashioning is discussed at length below, 187-9.

<sup>72</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 11

<sup>73</sup> For a comprehensive survey of recent studies in letters see: James Daybell, "Recent Studies in Seventeenth Century Letters", *English Literary Renaissance*, 36, no 1, (2006): 135-170

There are two final things to note about archival research into lived experience of domestic religion. First is to highlight the ephemeral nature of reference to domestic religion. It is often implicit rather than explicit; often throwaway; typically tantalisingly undeveloped, and leaves the researcher with more questions than answers. Past indexing practice usually prioritised the political, public, and national over the domestic, social, or religious. It is common to come across an item indexed as 'religious letter' or 'miscellaneous religious material' with no further detail or context. Compounding this is that the ephemeral nature of reference to domestic religion means that startling details can be just as easily be found in a concluding comment or post-script to a letter mainly dealing with other matters entirely. Second, due in part to the above, research into lived experience of domestic religion is potentially limitless. Relevant material could conceivably exist in any surviving archive from the period. I have identified families and archives most likely to contain material on domestic religion through hints in the existing secondary literature. J.T Cliffe's trilogy on the puritan gentry in the seventeenth century has been particularly useful in pointing out possible avenues.<sup>74</sup> This of course presents the problem of selection bias as families from a puritan background are judged to be more likely to have relevant archives.

### **Archival families**

In this section I introduce the families whose archives I utilise and sketch the significance of key individuals mentioned throughout. The Harley family of Brampton Bryan in Herefordshire form the major case study. The family are well known to historians due to the prominent political career of Robert Harley (1661-1724) 1st Earl of Oxford and Mortimer

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<sup>74</sup> JT Cliffe, *The Puritan Gentry: The Great Puritan Families*; JT Cliffe, *Puritans in Conflict: The Puritan Gentry During and After the Civil Wars*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 1988); JT Cliffe, *The Puritan Gentry Besieged*

who served as Chief Minister to Queen Anne.<sup>75</sup> Over a century earlier his grandfather and namesake Sir Robert Harley (1579-1656) successively established the family on the local, regional, and national stage via marriage and public service.

Sir Robert Harley did not hail from a determinedly puritan, or even Protestant, family; his grandfather John Harley (d. 1582) and other relatives had attracted the attention of church authorities for Catholic recusancy. Robert's father Thomas was neither Catholic nor an advanced Protestant. Though Robert's mother Margaret Corbet's family did embrace the beliefs and practices of extreme Protestantism, her godly influence upon Robert was short lived as she died before he was nine years old. The other puritan influence upon Robert was Cadwallar Owen, his tutor at Oriel College, Oxford, from whence he graduated BA in 1599.<sup>76</sup> His first marriage for nine short months in 1603 was to Ann Barrett, whose maternal grandfather was the puritan founder of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, Sir Walter Mildmay. This was followed by a marriage to Mary Newport about whom we know even less. Following her death in 1622 Robert married Brilliana Conway, daughter of privy councillor and secretary of State Sir Edward Conway. The Conway family had strong puritan ties and Brilliana's personal beliefs can be traced in her commonplace book from

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<sup>75</sup> W. A. Speck, "Harley, Robert, first earl of Oxford and Mortimer (1661–1724)" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, Oct 2007, accessed 14 Nov 2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12344>; Bryan W. Hill, *Robert Harley: Speaker, Secretary of State and Premier Minister*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 5; A. McInnes, *Robert Harley, Puritan Politician*, (London: Gollancz, 1970); David Hayton, "Robert Harley's 'Middle Way': The Puritan Heritage in Augustan Politics", *British Library Journal*, 15, no 2, (1989): 158-172.

<sup>76</sup> Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Fourteenth Report, Appendix II, The Manuscripts of His Grace the Duke of Portland*, 4, letter from C Owen inscribed 'From my Tutor' in Sir Robert Harley's hand. Also mentioned in a manuscript 'Introduction to the life of Sir Robert Harley' British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts 70107, Misc. 23

before her marriage.<sup>77</sup> It is from the period of their marriage, until Brilliana's death in 1643, that the majority of the evidence for domestic religion in Sir Robert's household survives.

Robert Harley was invested a Knight of the Order of the Bath in 1603. Initially he was active in local government and represented Radnor in Herefordshire in Parliament. Sir Robert's marriage to Brilliana thrust him onto the national stage acting as agent in the House of Commons for his father-in-law Secretary of State Viscount Conway. Through Conway's influence he became a member of the Council for the Welsh Marches and the Master of the Mint in the 1620s. Conway died in 1631 and Sir Robert lost the Mastership of the Mint in 1635, partly due, he believed, to his religious position. Sir Robert opposed the court during the personal rule and with the return to Parliament in 1640 spoke against Ship Money, Laudian religious policy and the war in Scotland.

Sir Robert was elected to represent Herefordshire in the Long Parliament on a reforming platform, however, the atmosphere in Herefordshire changed rapidly as hostilities between King and Parliament commenced. The Harleys found themselves isolated as a puritan and parliamentary family surrounded by strongly royalist neighbours. Sir Robert was based in London for most of the conflict. He took the Solemn League and Covenant in September 1643 and was an active member of Parliament, involved in many committees, including chairing the committee for the destruction of superstitious and idolatrous monuments. Brampton Bryan was laid siege by Royalist forces twice, amid which Lady Brilliana died in October 1643. Sir Robert's involvement in politics effectively ended with the ejection of himself and his eldest son Edward Harley from the Commons during 'Pride's Purge', likely

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<sup>77</sup> Jacqueline Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads The Harleys of Brampton Bryan and the Outbreak of the English Civil War*, (Glasgow: Hardinge Simpole, 2002), 16-22. First Published by Cambridge University Press in 1990. Eales' book provides the biographical details of the Harley family in the early seventeenth century.



as he favoured coming to terms with Charles I. Sir Robert died in Ludlow in 1656, with Brampton Bryan not yet restored following its depredation during the siege of 1643.

That Sir Edward Harley, son of Sir Robert and father of the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Oxford, has not yet found his historian is surprising given his detailed entry in the *ODNB* and the extensive manuscript archive of his papers and correspondence.<sup>78</sup> Sir Edward continued the tradition of moderate Puritanism in the Harley family into the late seventeenth century. Newton E. Key's study of post-restoration politics in Herefordshire characterised Sir Edward as a Presbyterian who practised occasional conformity to the established church while he pursued the project of comprehension. Comprehension was the effort to modify the requirements of ordination and communion in a manner that would be inclusive of moderate non-conformists.<sup>79</sup> Edward Harley married Mary Button, daughter and co-heir of Sir William Button in 1654 with whom he had four daughters. Considerably more correspondence survives between Sir Edward and his second wife Abigail, daughter of Nathaniel Stephens of Eastington, Gloucestershire whom he married in 1661; the same year he was made Knight of the Bath. They had four sons, one of whom died in infancy and a daughter, Abigail.

Sir Edward was active in Parliament and local politics throughout the later seventeenth century, gradually joined by his sons Robert and Edward. Sir Edward lived to see his sons marry and raise families and the family archives are full of correspondence between members of the family. Key correspondents are Sir Edward's daughters Martha and Abigail, his sons Robert and Edward, and their wives, Elizabeth and Sarah. Robert and Edward both

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<sup>78</sup> Gordon Goodwin, "Harley, Sir Edward (1624–1700)" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, accessed 17 Nov 2015  
<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12335>

<sup>79</sup> Newton E. Key, "Comprehension and the Breakdown of Consensus in Restoration Herefordshire" in *The Politics of Religion in Restoration England*, ed. Tim Harris, Paul Seaward, and Mark Goldie (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 191–215

married members of a puritan family in the West Midlands, the Foleys, and the connections and correspondence between the families was strong. The puritan style continued into the third generation, particularly in the case of the second son Edward, known as Auditor Harley on account of his office of auditor of imprest. In winter 1691-2 Edward contemplated becoming a minister in the dissenting church, and even consulted Richard Baxter, but was dissuaded by his father.<sup>80</sup> Robert and Edward pursued prominent political careers on into the eighteenth century but they moved away from the traditional family stance of opposition to the court and Robert Harley became Prime Minister to Queen Anne.

This introduction to the Harleys is relatively full as they are central to the thesis. Existing research utilising the Harley archives indicated that it was a rich source of evidence on domestic religion.<sup>81</sup> The size and completeness of their surviving manuscript archives, particularly their voluminous personal correspondence, and its coverage of the entire century means I can trace their religious practices from the beginning to the end of my period of study. As a family, they maintained roughly the same position on the spectrum of religious belief and intensity of practice throughout the century; lending extra significance to conclusions regarding continuity and change in their practices. The archive is also diverse adding to the evidence for lived experience in a myriad of ways.

Other families, such as the D'Ewes family, were not so consistent in religious outlook over the period. Sir Simonds D'Ewes was born in Dorset on 18 December 1602, the eldest son of Paul D'Ewes of Suffolk and Sissilia, daughter and heiress of Richard Simonds, a wealthy

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<sup>80</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70118, Edward Harley to Sir Edward Harley, 14 January 1691/2; 30 December 1691

<sup>81</sup> Jacqueline Eales discussed elements of the Harley family domestic religion in *Puritans and Roundheads*; however she focussed on the role of religion in their civil war allegiances. JT Cliffe used examples from the Harley family throughout his trilogy on the Puritan Gentry in the seventeenth century.

Dorset lawyer.<sup>82</sup> Paul D'Ewes purchased the office of clerk of the Court of Chancery in 1607 and established the family on an estate near Lavenham and Stow Hall near Stowlangtoft in Suffolk. Simonds D'Ewes was influenced in piety by his mother and youthful education settings. D'Ewes attended St John's Cambridge and Middle Temple, proceeding to the bar in 1623. In October 1626, following his marriage to Anne Clopton, daughter and heiress of wealthy Suffolk landowner Sir William Clopton, D'Ewes purchased his knighthood.<sup>83</sup> The couple inherited Stow Hall upon Paul D'Ewes' death in March 1631 and Anne also received her inheritance giving the couple financial independence. D'Ewes devoted his time to genealogical, historical, and bibliographical researches and pursuing family business. D'Ewes and Anne mourned the loss of eight children, with two daughters surviving. Anne died in 1641 and D'Ewes remarried to Elizabeth, heiress of Sir Henry Willoughby of Derbyshire. D'Ewes died when their son Willoughby was six weeks old. He did not follow in his father's devotional footsteps.<sup>84</sup>

D'Ewes has drawn the attention of historians for two main reasons. Firstly, his prodigious work as an antiquarian.<sup>85</sup> Secondly, his Parliamentary notes, edited and published as *The Journal of Sir Simonds D'Ewes*, have served as an important source for political historians

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<sup>82</sup> The details for Sir Simonds D'Ewes' life derive mainly from his manuscript autobiography, now British Library (BL) *Harley Mss 646*. Secondary accounts of his life draw almost exclusively on the details in this autobiography including: John Bruce, "The Long Parliament and Sir Simonds D'Ewes", *Edinburgh Review*, 84, no 169, (1846): 76-102; John Bruce, "Some notes on facts in the biography of Sir Simonds D'Ewes", *Archaeological Journal*, 26, (1869): 323-38; Mary Frear Keeler, "Sir Simonds D'Ewes" in *The Long Parliament, 1640-1641: a biographical study of its members*, (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1954), 156-7

<sup>83</sup> British Library, London, Cotton Charter XVI.13, f.15

<sup>84</sup> J. M. Blatchly, "D'Ewes, Sir Simonds, first baronet (1602-1650)" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, Jan 2008, accessed 29 Nov 2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7577>

<sup>85</sup> His reputation as a book and manuscript collector among bibliographers is due to the preservation of his collection which is almost intact in the Harleian collection in the British Library. It was purchased by Sir Robert Harley from his grandson for £450 in 1705. A.G. Watson has created an authoritative catalogue of D'Ewes' extensive library based on the catalogues prepared by D'Ewes, by visiting scholars, by Harley's agent in the purchase of the library and Works on D'Ewes as a manuscript collector include: Andrew G. Watson, "Sir Robert Cotton and Sir Simonds D'Ewes: an exchange of manuscripts", *British Museum Quarterly*, 25, no 1/2, (London: British Museum, 1962), 19-24; Andrew G. Watson, "Sir Simonds D'Ewes's collection of charters, and a note on the charters of Sir Robert Cotton", *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 2, no 6, (1962): 247-54

of the mid seventeenth-century.<sup>86</sup> Through the influence of the Barnardiston family, D'Ewes was returned as a Member of Parliament for Sudbury in November 1640. Due to his knowledge of records and British history, he was voted onto committees and often spoke with the puritan faction. D'Ewes supported Parliament throughout the 1640s, taking the Solemn League and Covenant in 1643. He was considered too moderate for many and was mistrusted as his brother had joined the Royalist army. He was excluded from Parliament in 1648 and devoted his remaining years to antiquarian pursuits.<sup>87</sup>

Despite this D'Ewes has been neglected by historians in terms of his religious outlook.<sup>88</sup> J. Sears McGee discussed D'Ewes' treatise *The Primitive Practise For Preserving Truth* and its theological positioning yet apart from some passing references in JT Cliffe's *Puritan Gentry* there had been no research into D'Ewes' devotional practice. During the final stage of writing Sears McGee's biography of D'Ewes was published; the 'first thorough exploration of the life and ideas of this extraordinary observer' which should address this.<sup>89</sup> The main source for D'Ewes' daily practise of religion is his manuscript autobiography, preserved as Harley 646 in the British Library.<sup>90</sup> D'Ewes' autobiography and the diaries from which it was constructed are discussed in the chapter on writing. This is complimented

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<sup>86</sup> Simonds D'Ewes, *The Journal of Sir Simonds D'Ewes from the beginning of the Long Parliament to the opening of the trial of the earl of Strafford*, ed. Wallace Notestein, (London: H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1923); Simonds D'Ewes, *The Journal of Sir Simonds D'Ewes from the first recess of the Long Parliament to the withdrawal of King Charles from London*, ed. Willson Havelock Coates, (London: H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1942); *The Private Journals of the Long Parliament, 2 June to 17 September 1642*, ed. Willson Havelock Coates, Vernon F. Snow and Anne Steele Young, (London: Yale University Press, 1992). John Bruce said 'these notes present us with a complete picture of the House in its ordinary proceedings; and a chronicle of the important businesses which were transacted' J. Bruce, "The Long Parliament and Sir Simonds D'Ewes", *Edinburgh Review*, 84, no 169, (1846): 84;

<sup>87</sup> J. M. Blatchly, "D'Ewes, Sir Simonds, first baronet, (1602-1650)", accessed 3 Sept 2007

<sup>88</sup> J. Sears McGee, "Sir Simonds D'Ewes and "the Poitovin Cholick": Persecution, Toleration, and the Mind of a Puritan Member of the Long Parliament", *Canadian Journal of History*, 38, no 3, (2003): 481-91

<sup>89</sup> J Sears McGee, *An Industrious Mind: The Worlds of Sir Simonds D'Ewes*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), accessed 28 November 2015, <http://www.sup.org/books/title/?id=22962>

<sup>90</sup> An edition of this was published by Halliwell in 1845, but it is unsatisfactory as it silently modernizes spelling, inverts word order and omits content offensive to Victorian sensibilities. Simonds D'Ewes, *The autobiography and correspondence of Sir Simonds D'Ewes during the reigns of James I and Charles I*, ed. James Orchard Halliwell, (London: Richard Bentley, 1845); A.G. Watson, *The Library of Sir Simonds D'Ewes*, 79

by other personal documents such as D'Ewes' commonplace book, sermon notes, account books and family letters. D'Ewes' practise of household religion can be placed in context using the sermons and treatises in his library.

The Gells of Hopton Hall were one of the most prominent and wealthy of the Derbyshire gentry and they were also distinguished by their Puritanism and Presbyterianism. Sir John made his name as commander of parliamentary forces during the Civil War yet became disaffected and by 1650 was imprisoned for plotting to restore Charles II. Seemingly in anticipation of these difficulties Sir John Gell made over his estates in 1646 to his son, also John, who did not serve in the parliamentary army. Sir John lived in London until his death in 1671 having received a pardon from the King at the Restoration.<sup>91</sup> His son John Gell, later second Baronet, married Katherine Packer sometime before the birth of their first child in 1645. Katherine herself hailed from an equally godly family. The couple were famed as Presbyterian patrons of godly ministers and as the governors of a religiously ordered household. Katherine Gell suffered from a delicate conscience and troubled soul; which prompted correspondence with clergy, most prominently Richard Baxter.<sup>92</sup> This correspondence, particularly with clergy besides Baxter, is not well known. The Gells offer particularly useful for evidence of lived experience in the mid- to late-seventeenth century. Of the puritan families discussed it was the Gells who came the closest to non-conformity. The family were reported for holding conventicles, although John Gell continued to attend Church of England services. The family also had chaplains in residence, many of whom

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<sup>91</sup> Ron Slack, *Man at War: John Gell in his troubled time*, (Chesterfield: R.Slack, 1997); Trevor Brighton, "Gell, Sir John, first baronet (bap. 1593, d. 1671)" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, Sept 2013, accessed 29 Nov 2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10508>

<sup>92</sup> William Lamont, "Gell, Katherine (bap. 1624, d. 1671)" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, accessed 29 Nov 2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/66997>

were non-conformist ministers ejected in 1662.<sup>93</sup> Towards the end of the century it is the correspondence of John and Katherine's younger, unmarried daughters Elizabeth and Temperance with clerical connections of the family which prove useful.

The archival research is complemented by printed sources for the period, such as the diary of Lady Margaret Hoby and the diary of Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick. Lady Hoby's diary was described by Graham Parry in the foreword to Joanna Moody's edition as a 'revelation of the procedures of Protestant piety at a domestic level'.<sup>94</sup> The original is part of the Egerton collection in the British Library however it is well known to historians through its printed editions. Lady Hoby was a member of the godly gentry in the very early part of the period. The Hoby's seat at Hackness in Yorkshire was, like the Harley's in Herefordshire, an area where traditionalists were strong. Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick meanwhile provides an important post-Restoration example of puritan piety. Rich's diary has not yet received the attention it deserves from historians of post-Restoration Puritanism. Possibly due to reservations about the representativeness of her social status or their focus on denomination. Moderate Puritans such as Rich and the Harleys who conformed, even if occasionally, are typically less visible in the historiography as they defy easy categorisation.

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<sup>93</sup> Cliffe, *The Puritan Gentry Besieged*, 214

<sup>94</sup> Moody, *The Private Life of an Elizabethan Lady*, xi

## Chapter 2: HOUSEHOLD RELIGION IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Scholars have long recognised the vital conceptual links between religiously ordered households and the health of church and state. Both church and state relied on the religiously well-ordered household to help them fulfil the laws of God. In turn, church and state upheld an ideal of the pious and well-ordered family and the rights and responsibilities of the male head of household.<sup>1</sup> William Perkins described the family as 'the seminarie of all other socities, it followeth, that the holie and righteous government therof, is a direct meane for the good ordering, both of church and commonwealth'.<sup>2</sup> Crucially then, what happened in the family was significant to church and state, for as William Gouge wrote 'A family is...a little Commonwealth...a school wherein the first principles and grounds of government and subjection are learned'.<sup>3</sup> This message was reinforced in catechisms and homilies with the result that 'everyone understood that what happened in their families was related to what happened in the state'.<sup>4</sup> There are many different examples of this message in the prescriptive literature.

The family-church-state analogy features heavily in Christopher Hill's account of the puritan spiritualized household. For Hill, Protestants, and more particularly Puritans, were the authors of the doctrine of family as the primary spiritual unit of society and the image of the godly patriarch.<sup>5</sup> Margo Todd challenged this assumption and showed how puritan theory and

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<sup>1</sup> Discussion of these ideas appears in: Edmund S Morgan, *The Puritan Family: Religion and Domestic Relations in Seventeenth-Century New England*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 133-160; Susan Dwyer Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988)

<sup>2</sup> William Perkins, *Christian oeconomie: or, A short survey of the right manner of erecting and ordering a familie according to the scriptures. First written in Latine by the author M. W. Perkins, and now set forth in the vulgar tongue, for more common vse and benefit, by Tho. Pickering Bachelor of Diuinitie*, (London: Edmund Weaver, 1609), dedication

<sup>3</sup> William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties: Eight Treatises*, (London: Printed by Iohn Haviand for William Bladen, 1622)

<sup>4</sup> Amussen, *An Ordered Society*, 36

<sup>5</sup> Hill, *Society and Puritanism*, 382-416

advice built upon earlier Christian humanist ideals and was replicated across the religious spectrum. Todd demonstrated substantial overlap in the advice of Christian Humanist, puritan, and 'Anglican conformist' writers regarding the elevation of marriage, religious duties of householders, spiritual equality of women, and the didactic imperative of parents.<sup>6</sup> This is not to deny the importance of such concepts to Puritans but to show the intellectual heritage of their ideas and the high level of consensus around the theory of family in the seventeenth century. Writers as diverse as William Perkins, William Gouge, John Cosin, Jeremy Taylor, and John Tillotson all wrote about domestic religion from within the family-church-state paradigm despite differences of emphasis and implication.

While the theory of household worship and its devotional activities have received attention from historians, there have been few attempts at tracing it throughout the seventeenth century. Some historians, in seeking to move beyond definitional debates about Puritanism, Anglicanism, and other loaded terms in seventeenth century history, have not fully engaged with denominational difference in this area. Historians have, on occasion, grouped together individuals who would not have recognised each other as co-religionists. In Andrew Cambers' recent work on godly reading for instance, some of his key case-studies, such as Lady Anne Clifford, could hardly be described as godly.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile Ian Green's landmark study *Print and Protestantism* 'collapses Protestantism into a theologically benign Anglicanism' leaving 'continuity and consensus as the keynotes of the subsequent analysis'.<sup>8</sup> Green's recent chapter on domestic devotion also treats Protestant culture and behaviour as monolithic. Other recent works on domestic religion, almost inevitably as they focus on one aspect of domestic religion, assume the early modern period was amorphous and do not

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<sup>6</sup> Todd, *Christian Humanism*, passim; See also: Stephen Baskerville, "The Family in Puritan Political Theology", *Journal of Family History*, 18 no 2, (1993), 157-77.

<sup>7</sup> Paul Seaver, "Godly Reading: Print, Manuscript and Puritanism in England, 1580–1720, a review", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 43, no 1, (2012): 94-95

<sup>8</sup> Andrew Cambers, *Godly Reading*, 28; Peter Lake, *The Anti-Christ's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England*, (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2002), 325



address the religio-political context and the influence of the course of the seventeenth century.

This chapter will set the scene for what follows. I consider the prescriptive theory of family religion, the 'why' of family religion, with close attention to nuance across the religious and devotional spectrum and over time. This will provide the religious and political backdrop. As subsequent chapters may, at times, seem a little potted due to the available evidence; this chapter will establish a timeline to relate to moments of religious and political significance. The influence of religious and political events are reflected in prescriptive justification and advice on household worship. Awareness of that relationship between contemporary events and published prescription helps contextualise the differences of emphasis and nuance. To consider domestic religion in the context of its time also brings into sharp focus how significant it could be to church, state, and people. I argue that there were broad areas of consensus on the theory and justification of family religion. However, as the century progressed, domestic religion became more religiously and politically charged. Over time prescriptive writers devoted more energy to justifying domestic and family religion, betraying their increasing uneasiness and demonstrating the divisive potential of domestic religion.

## **1600 - 1625**

The Elizabethan and Jacobean Church of England has been characterised as inclusive and comprehensive; 'providing an orthodox centre ground with wide boundaries'.<sup>9</sup> Nicholas Tyacke's central thesis that Jacobean Puritanism was incorporated into a Calvinist consensus centred on predestination, and it was Arminianism and Laudinism that destroyed the

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<sup>9</sup> Christopher Durston and Judith Maltby, 'Introduction: religion and revolution in seventh century England' in *Religion in Revolutionary England*, ed. Judith Maltby and Christopher Durston, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 3

consensus, has had considerable longevity.<sup>10</sup> Some have taken this even further; Patrick Collinson subsumes Puritanism so thoroughly into the heart of the Jacobean church establishment that he talked of the religion of Protestants rather than of Puritans.<sup>11</sup> A long list of historians including Lake, Seaver, Webster, Fincham, and Eales prefer to see Puritanism as a distinctive style of piety that, while it did operate in and around the established church, did not entirely monopolise the establishment and was not uncontested, unchallenged, or as orthodox and hegemonic as it has sometimes been presented.<sup>12</sup> While recognising that early Puritanism was indeed woven into the attitudes, aspirations, and institutions of the Jacobean national church; John Spurr demonstrates that the godly knew themselves to be, and their contemporaries saw them as, distinct.<sup>13</sup>

Sir Robert Harley expressed this sentiment in a letter of 1621 to his future uncle-by-marriage Sir Horace Vere. In response to the pejorative use of the phrase 'Puritan' in Parliament by Thomas Shepard, Harley proposed to present the character of a 'Puritane'. Jacqueline Eales in her sensitive analysis highlights that Harley did not mention predestination, commonly seen as a central aspect of the puritan world view by historians. Instead Harley stresses rigorous conscience and scriptural fidelity in ceremonial matters as the key elements of Puritanism.<sup>14</sup> This supports the interpretation of early seventeenth century Puritanism as a distinctive presence within the established mainstream. The term 'Puritan' was, at this point, a label few

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<sup>10</sup> Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists, The Rise of English Arminianism c.1590-1640*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), passim; Peter Lake, "Introduction: Puritanism, Arminianism and Nicholas Tyacke" in *Religious Politics in Post-Reformation England (Studies in Modern British Religious History, Vol.13)*, eds. Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake, (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), 2

<sup>11</sup> Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), passim; Peter Lake and David Como, "'Orthodoxy' and Its Discontents: Dispute Settlement and the Production of 'Consensus' in the London (Puritan) Underground", *The Journal of British Studies*, 39, no 1, (2000): 36; Peter Lake, "Defining Puritanism - again?" in *Puritanism: transatlantic perspectives on a seventeenth-century Anglo-American faith*, ed. Francis Bremer, (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1993), 5

<sup>12</sup> Peter Lake, *The Box-makers Revenge: 'Orthodoxy', 'Heterodoxy' and the politics of the parish in Early Stuart London*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 12; Lake, Como, "'Orthodoxy' and Its Discontents", 36

<sup>13</sup> John Spurr, *English Puritanism 1603-1689*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), 7, 15

<sup>14</sup> Jacqueline Eales, "Sir Robert Harley, K.B., (1579-1656) and the 'Character' of a Puritan", *British Library Journal*, 15, (1989): 134-157

would have welcomed. That Harley embraces the word and seeks to reshape and define it is significant; it marks a point of transition when something like a godly, or puritan, community begins to make sense.

The first two decades of the seventeenth century were a period of relative consensus and the theory and practice of family religion was uncontroversial. This is reflected in the relatively brief justifications for family religion offered by the prescriptive authors of the time. That the authors do not work hard to convince their audiences of the importance of family religion suggests it was a widespread and consensual belief. Underpinning the rationales presented for family religion is the commonplace that the family is the first unit of organization in human society; the most ancient society or state. William Perkins, in *A Christian Oeconomie*, composed before his death in 1602 and published in 1609, wrote that a family is bound in duty to itself and to God. The family's duty to itself consists of each members' duties to the others; and its duty to God is private worship and service to him. The blessing of God is annexed to his worship and is responsible for the happiness and prosperity of families.<sup>15</sup> Perkins is seen as a luminary of early Puritanism, who gave it much of its character in terms of theology, practical divinity, and moderate ecclesiology.<sup>16</sup> Perkins' justification of family religion is straightforward and fairly brief, amounting to no more than two small pages.

Richard Bernard's 1612 treatise on household government concentrates on the analogy of family to church explaining that 'the congregation is the ministers cure, so the family is the masters charge, wherein the chief of the house...is to teach the children and household in the waies of god.' Family religion assisted the clergy with their efforts to reform whole communities and amplified the public means of reform. Bernard's emphasis on the role of

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<sup>15</sup> Eales, "Sir Robert Harley", 2-4

<sup>16</sup> Michael Jenkins, "Perkins, William (1558–1602)", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, May 2007, accessed 26 Jan 2017, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21973>

family religion in sustaining the established church and public religion may be inspired by a desire to distance himself from his brief embrace of separatism in 1606.<sup>17</sup> Just as the king was responsible for the nation and the minister was responsible for the spiritual health of his congregation, the male householder was responsible for the performance of religious duties by his family. Consequently works on family religion were usually directed at male householders, likening them to priests for their families. John Downname's 1622 treatise *A Guide to Godlynesse* described the male householder's duty as a governor of others; to lead communal exercises and, by making their house a house of prayer, to call down God's presence and spiritual and temporal blessings.<sup>18</sup> These early seventeenth century works on family religion give relatively brief proofs of its necessity, at least in comparison with the extensive and robust defences in the later works.

## 1625 - 1640

From the mid-1620s until 1640, those the historian Nicholas Tyacke described as anti-Calvinists sought to redefine 'Puritanism so as to include Calvinist teachings on predestination and thus discredit their opponents' as potentially seditious non-conformists.<sup>19</sup> Arminian or Laudian 'Anti-Calvinists' were increasingly appointed to lofty ecclesiastical positions by Charles I. Laudians were those allies and adherents of William Laud who became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633. However, the term is often used more loosely in reference to the Church of England during the personal rule of the 1630s. Historians have usually

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<sup>17</sup> Richard L. Greaves, "Bernard, Richard (bap. 1568, d. 1642)", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, Oct 2009, accessed 26 Jan 2017, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2249>; Richard Bernard, *Josuahs Godly Resolution in Conference with Caleb, touching household government for well ordering a familie*, (London: John Legatt, printer to the Vniuersitie of Cambridge, 1612), 21-2, 27. Bernard entered a covenant with 100 people from the Worksop area 1606. He subsequently partially conformed and launched bitter attacks on separatists.

<sup>18</sup> John Downname, *A guide to godlynesse*, (London: William Stansby, 1622), 239-40. Downname was reported for non-conformity early in the century but subsequently avoided the attention of the authorities, perhaps due to the immunity granted by his authoritative reputation as an author. Paul Seaver, "Downham, John (1571-1652)" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, Jan 2008, accessed 11 March 2017, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7978>

<sup>19</sup> Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, 141

focused on the Arminian theology of grace: a move away from the doctrine of predestination to an emphasis on the efficacy of the sacrament to confer grace. Peter Lake has instead focussed on defining the characteristics of an Arminian or Laudian style, with findings of practical consequence for family religion. The Laudian view of the divine presence in the world concentrated on the presence of God in church, which was then suffused with an aura of holiness. God's presence should inspire awe, fear and reverence which should in turn find an expression in the ceremonies and liturgy of the church. Lake believed that this allowed Laudians to equate active lay piety with zealous participation in the services of the church and to lay great stress on ceremonial conformity. It also emphasised the role and significance of prayer in the services of the church, to the detriment of sermons. While they did not proscribe the performance of domestic religion, Laudians agreed that public prayer was more important, uniting Christians in a militant church, and promoted its frequent and zealous performance. This is in contrast to practices of mainstream Calvinist or puritan lay activism, such as family prayers centred on the domestic household, and the Jacobean vision of a preaching ministry.<sup>20</sup>

The dearth of writing about family religion in this period can be attributed to the ambivalence of anti-Calvinist preachers and prescriptive writers. When Laudian writers discussed family worship they trod a fine line between elevating public worship without overtly condemning family religion and personal piety. Consequently we turn to relatively obscure clerical writers. Richard Tedder was a Rector at Whinburgh and Garvaston in Norfolk.<sup>21</sup> He preached at Wymondham on 3 June 1636 in the presence of Matthew Wren, Bishop of Norwich,

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<sup>20</sup> Peter Lake, "The Laudian Style: Order, Uniformity and the Pursuit of the Beauty of Holiness in the 1630s" in *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642*, ed. Kenneth Fincham, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1993), 164-9, 173

<sup>21</sup> "Richard Tedder" (CCed Person ID 118667), *The Clergy of the Church of England Database 1540-1835*, accessed 26 January 2017, <http://db.theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/search/index.jsp>

during his primary visitation which sought to promote the Laudian altar policy.<sup>22</sup> Tedder passionately expressed the elevation of the Church above domestic space.

'Ever since God hath been the owner of a house, though the fanaticall schismaticke would allow him none, he would make God at best but his inmate, and he should lodge in charity with him... An house God will have of us, to whom we are beholden for ours; not a chamber, or a parlour, a part of a house, but a whole house, and that not common to others, but proper to himself, which we may call his owne'.<sup>23</sup>

The Church, or 'House of God', was designed for the exercise of the religious duty of prayer. Tedder did not deny the value of preaching but asserted that prayer was more valuable and bewailed that preaching had pushed prayer aside.<sup>24</sup> 'Pray at home wee may, but we cannot pray at home as at Church' he wrote, attributing the slow growth in religion to contempt of church prayer and the elevation of preaching above prayer.<sup>25</sup>

This echoed Robert Shelford's sentiments in his 1635 *Five pious and learned discourses*. 'But some will say, I can pray, and serve God as well at home in mine own house' he writes 'Thou mayest serve God there, but not so well' for although God will hear prayers anywhere he will hear them 'sooner and with greater respect' in Church.<sup>26</sup> Shelford was Rector at Ringsfield in Suffolk for forty years until his death in 1639. The Laudian sympathies displayed in the book were criticised by Calvinist Archbishop James Usher as 'rotten stuff' encouraging papist

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<sup>22</sup> Nicholas W. S. Cranfield, "Wren, Matthew (1585–1667)", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, Oct 2008, accessed 14 Sept 2013, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30021>

<sup>23</sup> Richard Tedder, *A sermon preached at Wimondham in Norfolke, at the primary visitation of the Right Honourable and Reverend Father in God, Matthevv, Lord Bishop of Norwich, on the third of Iune, Ann. Dom. 1636*. By Richard Tedder, (London: Printed by Thomas Harper, 1637), 5

<sup>24</sup> Tedder, *A Sermon preached*, 11

<sup>25</sup> Tedder, *A Sermon preached*, 13

<sup>26</sup> Robert Shelford, *Five pious and leamed discourses 1. A sermon shewing how we ought to behave our selves in Gods house. 2. A sermon preferring holy charity before faith, hope, and knowledge. 3. A treatise shewing that Gods law, now qualified by the Gospel of Christ, is possible, and ought to be fulfilled of us in this life. 4. A treatise of the divine attributes. 5. A treatise shewing the Antichrist not to be yet come*. By Robert Shelford of Ringsfield in Suffolk priest, (Cambridge: Printed by the printers to the Universitie of Cambridge, 1635), 7-8

'obstinancy'.<sup>27</sup> In Peter Lake's analysis, Laudian writing such as this diminished the relative significance of preaching, however it could also be said to diminish the relative importance of household religion.<sup>28</sup> That is not to say that Laudians did not value the religiously ordered household, rather that in terms of worship their priority was church rather than household. Laud himself wrote about the religious responsibilities of householders but focused on their duty to send their household to church to learn their catechism.<sup>29</sup>

Erica Longfellow demonstrates that cultural suspicion of solitary prayer had been common to English Protestants in the late sixteenth century and among the proto-Arminian avant garde churchmen in early seventeenth century England.<sup>30</sup> The tension between public and household worship can be seen in Daniel Featley's *Ancilla pietatis: or, The handmaid to private devotion* published in 1626. He is aware of potential criticism for encouraging domestic worship and defends himself: 'My intent is not to detract any thing from publike deuotion; but my desire is to adde to priuate.... Our Sauour diuideth blessednesse equally betweene them both'.<sup>31</sup> Featley straddles divides and his work can be seen as one of compromise and accommodation between two styles which were moving apart in this period.

Control over the press and suppression of Calvinist preaching discouraged godly discussions of the theory and practice of family worship in the 1630s. Communal religious activities in puritan households attracted some hostility from the Laudian church because of their

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<sup>27</sup> Arnold Hunt, "Shelford, Robert (c.1563–1638/9)", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, Jan 2008, accessed 9 Nov 2013, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/65825>

<sup>28</sup> Lake, "The Laudian Style", 169

<sup>29</sup> Hill, *Society and Puritanism*, 387

<sup>30</sup> Erica Longfellow, "'My now solitary prayer': Eikon basilike and Changing Attitudes toward Religious Solitude", in *Private and Domestic Devotion in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Jessica Martin and Alec Ryrie (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 61-2

<sup>31</sup> Daniel Featley, *Ancilla pietatis: or, The hand-maid to priuate deuotion presenting a manuall to furnish her with necessary principles offaith. Forcible motiues to a holy life. Vsefull formes of hymmes and prayers*, (London: printed by G.M and R.B., 1626), 6

potentially seditious nature.<sup>32</sup> As early as 1583 the Church of England had prohibited preaching, reading, catechising, and performing exercises in private places in the presence of those outside the family, but we do not know how seriously this was enforced before the 1630s. By 1636 Bishop Wren's Norwich visitation included presentments for laymen discussing religion in their families.<sup>33</sup> For anti-Calvinists many ordinary forms of puritan piety, such as enthusiastic family worship, appeared to be 'sinister precursors to separation'.<sup>34</sup> Historians such as Christopher Hill have echoed this interpretation, describing the independent congregation 'as an extension of household prayers'.<sup>35</sup> Reluctant to condemn domestic devotion wholesale; the key feature that anti-Calvinists seized upon was the presence of worshippers from beyond the household, as puritan beliefs would be disseminated by such means. Gilbert Ironside wrote that those who extend private devotions to the whole family should 'keep himselfe within the compasse of his owne charge, not admitting any of other places; for then he becomes offensive to the State, who hath, and that justly, a jealousy over all such Assemblies.' Ironside condemned household worship proceeding not from sincerity of heart but from 'sinister ends'.<sup>36</sup> Ironside was a Dorset clergyman of Laudian sympathies in the 1630s and later Bishop of Bristol after the Restoration.<sup>37</sup> Laudians clearly feared the potential of these alternative acts of worship.

Efforts to control household worship began with domestic chaplains. Charles I issued directions to the bishops in 1629 that only noblemen and those with a strict legal entitlement were allowed to employ a domestic chaplain. In practice, many godly families continued to

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<sup>32</sup> John Spurr, *The Post-Reformation, Religion, Politics and Society in Britain 1603-1714*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 310-1

<sup>33</sup> Hill, *Society and Puritanism*, 403-4

<sup>34</sup> Lake, "The Laudian Style", 182

<sup>35</sup> Hill, *Society and Puritanism*, 403

<sup>36</sup> Gilbert Ironside, *Seven questions of the sabbath briefly disputed, after the manner of the schooles Wherein such cases, and scruples, as are incident to this subject, are cleared, and resolved, by Gilbert Ironside B.D.*, (Oxford: Printed by Leonard Lichfield printer to the famous Vniversity, 1637), 268-9

<sup>37</sup> John Spurr, "Ironside, Gilbert (1588–1671)", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, accessed 14 Jan 2017, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14461>



maintain a domestic chaplain throughout the 1630s but those who did not act with circumspection came to the attention of the authorities.<sup>38</sup> Sir Simonds D'Ewes feared that his family prayer days might be construed as illegal conventicles; so much so that he wrote to a local cleric, Richard Chamberlaine, to check the legality of holding them with neighbours.<sup>39</sup> This fear had some justification. Sir Henry Rosewell of Forde Abbey, then part of Devon, appeared before the High Commission in 1639 under suspicion of holding conventicles with as many as twenty or thirty persons from beyond his household.<sup>40</sup> Sir Robert Harley and his rector at Brampton Bryan, Stanley Gower, were charged with, among other things, holding fasts 'of their own creating' involving extempore prayer and preaching.<sup>41</sup> Sir Robert attributed the loss of his office as Master of the Mint to welcoming non-conformist clerics into his home.<sup>42</sup> Despite this anxious atmosphere household worship and family prayers became more important for those dissatisfied with the services of the Laudian church. Their experiences at home and in church in the 1630s, combined with the fortunes of the Protestant territories and churches on the continent, promoted an increasing sense of a persecuted and embattled self-identifying godly or puritan community.<sup>43</sup>

## 1640 - 1660

Among Puritans such as the Harleys, there were high hopes for further reformation of the church, and relief from persecution, when Parliament was recalled in 1640 after its decade-long hiatus. Sir Robert Harley prepared a list of questions to be put in Parliament including 'whether it be fitt yt christians who meete together to fast & pray for subduing there sins... for obteyning increase of grace or some speciall blessing from God; not medling with any

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<sup>38</sup> Cliffe, *The Puritan Gentry: The Great Puritan Families*, 158-168

<sup>39</sup> British Library, London, Harley Manuscripts, 399, f.38

<sup>40</sup> Cliffe, *The Puritan Gentry: The Great Puritan Families*, 167

<sup>41</sup> Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads*, 57-8

<sup>42</sup> Cliffe, *The Puritan Gentry: The Great Puritan Families*, 194-5

<sup>43</sup> This process has been described and conceptualised in the work of Jacqueline Eales.

business of state, should be punished for it & [accused] of conventicles'.<sup>44</sup> This demonstrates the threat that Puritans felt to their household religion in the 1630s. In the changed circumstances of 1645 two members of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, Daniel Cawdrey and Herbert Palmer, published a treatise reasserting the sabbatarian position. In it they suggested that their adversaries 'doe in effect deny any other Solemne Worship then Publike' and command only public ecclesiastical worship as a necessary duty under the fourth commandment.<sup>45</sup> Cawdrey and Palmer, meanwhile, divided solemn worship into 'solitary, and conjoynd: and then divided the latter into Domesticall or Family-Worship, and Ecclesiasticall or Congregationall' and took pains to prove solitary and family worship to be part of solemn worship and a necessary moral and natural duty. Cawdrey and Palmer argued that God placed men in families not only for their worldly convenience but chiefly so they could worship him jointly together. They wrote 'how doth the Master of a Family love God with all his strength, that imployes not his authority over all his Family to call them to worship God even in the Family, with himselfe'.<sup>46</sup> The tone of this text is disputatious and shows how far the Jacobean consensus over family religion had broken down by the 1640s.

The Long Parliament legislated to dismantle the Laudian regime and apparatus in 1640-1642. However, unity over this programme broke down when some puritan MPs called for the abolition of episcopacy and the Prayer Book, in the face of still considerable attachment to and support for both. This division helped form the sides in the coming armed conflict. Parliament pursued ecclesiastical reform throughout the 1640s; abolishing episcopacy, replacing the *Book of Common Prayer* with the Westminster Assembly of Divines' *Directory for Public Worship*, and adopting plans for a new national Presbyterian structure. The

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<sup>44</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70002, f.251

<sup>45</sup> Daniel Cawdrey and Hebert Palmer, *Sabbatum redivivum: or The Christian sabbath vindicated; in a full discourse concerning the sabbath, and the Lords day. Wherein, whatsoever hath been written of late for, or against the Christian sabbath, is exactly, but modestly examined: and the perpetuity of a sabbath deduced, from grounds of nature, and religious reason*, (London: Printed by Robert White, 1645), 77, 73

<sup>46</sup> Cawdrey, Palmer, *Sabbatum redivivum*, 80-1

Westminster Assembly aimed to encourage and support family religion through publishing catechisms for use in the home. In 1646 they voted that those who neglected family prayers and instruction were guilty of sin.<sup>47</sup> However the power struggle between Parliament and the army in the late 1640s led to little official support for a compulsive national church and instead to a commitment to religious toleration. The 1650 Act for the Relief of Peaceable People effectively made Sabbath church attendance optional and other protectorate documents enshrined the policy of toleration to law-abiding Trinitarian Christians.<sup>48</sup> In this context the Calvinist tradition of the early Stuart church split into a variety of denominational traditions, from Presbyterians to Baptists.

What they saw as the anarchy of the 1650s was a million miles away from what moderate Puritans and Presbyterians like the Harley family had hoped for. They blamed the failure of the godly revolution on the continuing influence of the Church of England on one side and sectaries on the other.<sup>49</sup> Through printed literature and initiatives such as the Clerical Associations inspired by Richard Baxter, Presbyterians and conservative independents sought to distance themselves from the perceived blasphemy and anarchy of the sects, reclaim or protect their congregations, and present themselves in an orthodox and orderly light. They particularly sought to capitalise on the reaction versus the sects as the restoration appeared increasingly likely in the late 1650s.<sup>50</sup> Writings on family religion could be used to promote themselves as orthodox, godly, sober, and most of all ordered, in contrast to their opponents on both sides. In 1655 Philip Goodwin lamented that ‘religious duties [are] sunk downe in

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<sup>47</sup> Hill, *Society and Puritanism*, 392

<sup>48</sup> Durston, Maltby, “Introduction: religion and revolution”, 4, 7-9; Ann Hughes, “‘The public profession of these nations’: the national church in interregnum England” in *Religion in Revolutionary England*, ed. Judith Maltby and Christopher Durston, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 95

<sup>49</sup> Spurr, *English Puritanism*, 114-23

<sup>50</sup> Spurr, *English Puritanism*, 125-128; Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 85-116

divers families' by which means the very life of religion languishes in his time.<sup>51</sup> Goodwin, a godly minister of local importance in interregnum Hertfordshire, attributes this neglect to 'enemies of our peace' who have suggested that family religion distracts people from the performance of public religion.<sup>52</sup> William Thomas, for his part, puts neglect of prayer in individual families down to ignorance, profaneness, spiritual sloth, worldliness, and atheism.<sup>53</sup> In doing so these two interregnum authors defend family prayer, establishing it as an orthodox practice important for the health of the national church and society as a whole. They simultaneously condemn what they see as the spiritual aridity of the pre-1640 Church of England and contemporary loyalists and the blasphemy of the sects.

Goodwin's treatise favoured family religion for the ecclesiastical, political, and domestic benefits it brought. The religiously ordered household was the well tended vineyard and the resultant fruit were young souls for God.<sup>54</sup> The health of the church at large relies on the 'little churches' of praying families for 'the garden of gods church is watered by the river of familie-prayer'.<sup>55</sup> Family prayer also protected the state or kingdom as 'through the prayer of families are publike calamities kept off and publike immunities kept up.' 'Religious praying families' were apparently 'the preservations of towns and cities' for as 'the hedge of gods protection is broken down by sin, so tis made up by prayer.'<sup>56</sup> Most of all family prayer

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<sup>51</sup> Philip Goodwin, *Religio domestica rediviva: or, Family-religion revived. Or A treatise as to discover the good old way of serving god in private houses: so to recover the pious practice of those precious duties unto their primitive platform. Lamentably laid down in these back-sliding dayes*, (London: Printed by R. & W. Leybourn, 1655), f.a2v, 2; H. R. French, "Goodwin, Philip (d. 1667)" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, Jan 2008, accessed 27 Jan 2017, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10995>

<sup>52</sup> Goodwin, *Religio domestica rediviva*, f.a3v

<sup>53</sup> William Thomas, *A preservative of piety in a quiet reasoning for those duties of religion, that are the means and helps appointed of God for the preserving and promoting of godliness. Namely, I. Of four Christian -duties, viz. 1. Reading the Scriptures. 2. Preparation for the Lords Supper. 3. Estimation of the ministry. 4. Sanctification of the Lords-day-Sabbath. II. Of four family-duties, viz. 1. Houshold-catechising. 2. Family-prayer. 3. Repeating of sermons. 4. Singing of Psalms. With an epistle prefixt, to inform and satisfie the Christian reader, concerning the whole treatise*, (London, 1662), 175-6

<sup>54</sup> Thomas, *A Preservative of Piety*, f.a2v

<sup>55</sup> Thomas, *A Preservative of Piety*, 120-1

<sup>56</sup> Goodwin, *Religio domestica rediviva*, 114, 119

protects the family from sin, want, and 'Household miseries'.<sup>57</sup> Goodwin firmly established family prayer as an orthodox act promoting order and stability in the state and in families and family religion as a stimulus to growth and vitality in the national church. This was designed to disprove critics who saw voluntary religious activities of Puritanism, such as family prayer, as a stepping stone to sectarian anarchy.<sup>58</sup> The emphasis on family prayer's role in preserving religious, political, and social order was designed to distance Goodwin and his fellow moderates from the destabilising activities of the sects. However, while presenting family prayer as a buttress to public worship and social and political order, he betrayed an awareness of the potential for family worship to be an alternative to public worship. He wrote 'our present priviledges of publike ordinances may have an astonishing stop, so that the whole service of God will sink if it hath no support in families.'<sup>59</sup> This is prescient given his ejection for non-conformity in 1662.<sup>60</sup> Goodwin's defence of family prayer based on its perceived benefit for church, state, and family is a more extensive and detailed version of Bernard's early seventeenth century defence of family prayer as the bedrock of public duties. The pressure on moderate Puritanism provoked more extensive defence of godly family prayer, marshalling a greater variety of proofs and arguments.

William Thomas was an important godly preacher in Somerset who was in trouble with ecclesiastical authorities throughout his career; from deprivation for refusing to read the Book of Sports in 1634 to ejection in 1662. Part of Richard Baxter's wide circle of correspondents, he was involved in setting up Presbyterian Church government in London and Somerset and

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<sup>57</sup> Goodwin, *Religio domestica rediviva*, 12, 30, 111-3, 70, 87

<sup>58</sup> Spurr, *English Puritanism*, 122

<sup>59</sup> Goodwin, *Religio domestica rediviva*, 93

<sup>60</sup> H. R. French, "Goodwin, Philip (d. 1667)" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, Jan 2008, accessed 27 Jan 2017, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10995>

conducted furious disputes with Quakers and independents.<sup>61</sup> In *A Preservative of Piety*, Thomas takes a different approach following a common rhetorical scheme. He divides the material into the grounds of scripture and the grounds of reason. He first established that general rules and doctrines of scripture are binding in all those particulars that are rightly drawn from them. Therefore ‘though it be not said in so many words, that every Christian householder is to pray with his household, yet this is really said in scripture’ through other commands, including to glorify God in the family and to procure God's blessing to sanctify all household business. Biblical example also justifies prescription and Thomas expounded ‘divers examples of governours of families joyning with their household in the duty of prayer’.<sup>62</sup> Thomas derived persuasions to family prayer from reason including: that God requires service from every society and every family is a society; that among those who have common concerns such as sins, wants, mercies, and afflictions ‘there should be a common and joint seeking’ of God; and that in gracious Christians there is a common instinct of piety which puts them upon the duty of family prayer.<sup>63</sup> In the context of Thomas’ confrontations with Quakers and independents we can see his arguments in favour of family religion as a defence of the authority and divinity of the Bible in the face of sectarian mysticism and of rationality and order in the face of their perceived anarchism.<sup>64</sup> He adopts a common and well-trodden rhetorical device in order to identify his work with clerical order.

There were those in revolutionary and Interregnum England who remained committed to the *The Book of Common Prayer* and to the episcopacy of the Church of England, even if they may not have been happy with Laudian innovations in the 1630s; those whom historian

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<sup>61</sup> S. J. Guscott, “Thomas, William (1592/3–1667)” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, accessed 14 Jan 2017  
<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27243>

<sup>62</sup> Thomas, *A preservative of piety*, 155-70

<sup>63</sup> Thomas, *A preservative of piety*, 172-4

<sup>64</sup> Spurr, *English Puritanism*, 122; Watts, *The Dissenters*, 179-209

Judith Maltby terms ‘Prayer Book Protestants’.<sup>65</sup> The Interregnum parliamentary reform of the Church of England specifically targeted the Prayer Book, the festive calendar, and the Episcopal structure, just those features which were best loved and most defined the Church of England. Despite the imposition of the *Directory for the Public Worship of God* in 1645 the Prayer Book continued to be used in the household by laymen or in the churches of sympathetic clergymen.<sup>66</sup> Richard Ginn pointed out copies of the Prayer Book surviving in the Bodleian Library which appear to have been printed in England 1645-1650.<sup>67</sup> The survival of Prayer Book Protestantism and emergent Anglicanism during the Interregnum depended on household religion and family prayers. The royalist John Evelyn’s diary includes numerous instances of private use of the Prayer Book at home; from celebrations of the Blessed Sacrament to baptisms and the churching of his wife.<sup>68</sup> Future Archbishop William Sancroft’s manuscript correspondence from the period singles out Sir Philip Warwick, Sir Robert Bindloss, Sir Robert Shirley, and Sir Henry Yelverton as gentlemen who welcomed Anglican divines into their homes for Prayer Book prayers.<sup>69</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer* was central to these devotions held in domestic spaces.

Even when the Prayer Book itself was not used directly, it was a vital resource for communal prayer and provided material for use in family prayers. Jeremy Taylor’s *Collection of Offices* was published in 1658 for use by clerics or householders seeking to express their commitment to the Prayer Book while remaining within the law. It was an original work which followed the Prayer Book in language, structure, and emphasis.<sup>70</sup> At this time many

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<sup>65</sup> Judith Maltby, “Suffering and surviving: the civil wars, the Commonwealth and the formation of ‘Anglicanism’, 1642-60” in *Religion in Revolutionary England*, ed. Judith Maltby and Christopher Durston, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 159

<sup>66</sup> Maltby, “Suffering and Surviving”, 163; John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), 14

<sup>67</sup> Richard J. Ginn, *The Politics of Prayer in Early Modern Britain: Church and State in Seventeenth-Century England*, (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007), 17

<sup>68</sup> Maltby, “Suffering and surviving”, 166; Spurr, *The Restoration*, 1-3, 16-8

<sup>69</sup> Spurr, *The Restoration*, 14

<sup>70</sup> Spurr, *The Restoration*, 16

Anglican clerical writers turned to writing devotional and prescriptive works of advice for lay people. Jeremy Taylor was an important writer in this context. A protégé of Laud, Taylor was Arminian in theology and a central figure in what John Spurr describes as the 'holy living' school of mid-seventeenth-century Anglicanism'.<sup>71</sup> His Rutland living was sequestered for his royalism and Taylor wrote the devotional works for which he would be most famous in the late 1640s and early 1650s. Taylor published *Holy Living* for the laity so 'that by a collection of holy precepts they might lesse feel the want of personall and attending Guides, and that the rules for conduct of soules might be committed to a Book which they might alwayes have; since they could not alwayes have a Prophet at their needs'.<sup>72</sup> In addition to outlining general rules for holy living the text provided set prayers for use, for example, in the morning after dressing, at bed time, before acts such as studying, and in temptations. There are no specific instructions regarding family religion in *Holy Living* yet its exercises and prayers could have easily been adapted for communal family worship. *Holy Living* was a best-selling manual of practical Anglican piety for the rest of the seventeenth century, reaching its nineteenth edition in 1695.

*The Whole Duty of Man*, first published in 1658, was another Anglican publishing sensation that first appeared during the Interregnum. Most likely written by Richard Allestree, it showed 'the very meanest readers' how 'to behave themselves so in this world that they may be happy for ever in the next', translating Arminian theology into practical advice for the ordinary Anglican.<sup>73</sup> Allestree urged the performance of family prayer describing it as a second sort of public prayer. It was the master of the family's 'part' to provide for the soul of

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<sup>71</sup> John Spurr, "Taylor, Jeremy (bap. 1613, d. 1667)", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, Oct 2006, accessed 3 Nov 2013, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27041>

<sup>72</sup> Jeremy Taylor, *The rule and exercises of holy living. In which are described the means and instruments of obtaining every vertue, and the remedies against every vice, and considerations serving to the resisting all temptations. Together with prayers containing the whole duty of a Christian, and the parts of devotion fitted to all occasions, and furnish'd for all necessities*, (London, 1650), preface to Richard Lord Vaughan

<sup>73</sup> John Spurr, "Allestree, Richard (1621/2–1681)", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, accessed 21 Sept 2013, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/395>



his children and servants.<sup>74</sup> It is significant that 'part' and not 'duty' is used here in a book about the duty of man. It was valuable to perform family prayer and fitting for the householder to lead this, but it was not a duty. Furthermore, family worship was to be firmly embedded in the context of public prayer. The best material one could use for family prayer was *The Book of Common Prayer*. Allestree provided prayers for personal devotions but none for families 'because the Providence of God and the Church hath already furnish'd thee for that purpose, infinitely beyond what my utmost care could do. I mean the *PUBLICK LITURGY*, or *COMMON PRAYER*, which for all publick addresses to God (and such are Family prayers) are so excellent & useful'.<sup>75</sup>

It is tempting to see the domestication of Prayer Book Protestantism at this time in the same light as Roman Catholic recusants or restoration non-conformists, yet Maltby insists that Church of England loyalists did not see the Interregnum national church as a false church, just as under a malign and misguided influence.<sup>76</sup> This is to assert that family prayer based on the Prayer Book contained no impulse to separation from the national church. In penning their works Taylor and Allestree acknowledged the interregnum reality that personal and family devotions filled a void in public worship. However their reluctance to imagine and give substance to the practice of family prayer shows the continued ambivalence of Anglicans, as we can begin to call them, to family worship. By using the language of the Prayer Book in their template prayers and explicitly prescribing the use of prayers from the Prayer Book these authors sought to control what they see as the disruptive potential of

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<sup>74</sup> Richard Allestree, *The practice of Christian graces, or, The whole duty of man laid down in a plaine and familiar way for the use of all, but especially the meanest reader : divided into XVII chapters, one whereof being read every Lords Day, the whole may be read over thrice in the year : with Private devotions for several occasions*, (London: Printed by D. Maxwell, 1658), 116

<sup>75</sup> Allestree, *The whole duty of Man*, 561

<sup>76</sup> Maltby, "Suffering and surviving", 166-7; Judith Maltby, "'The Good Old Way': Prayer Book Protestantism in the 1640s and 1650s", *Studies in Church History*, 38, (2004), 233-256.

family religion. There was a clear message that household worship was second best to the public ordinances of *The Book of Common Prayer*.

### 1660 - 1689

While Presbyterians regarded the re-establishment of the Church of England as inevitable, after the restoration of Charles II they had high hopes that a new settlement would bring a modified ecclesiology and liturgy. Their hopes were not ungrounded as Charles II's declaration of Breda and the Worcester House Declaration of October 1660 indicated a moderate and conciliatory policy.<sup>77</sup> However, the Cavalier parliament enacted the 1662 Act of Uniformity, which imposed a strict conformity to the Episcopal structure and unmodified Prayer Book on the clergy and required them to abjure the Covenant and receive Episcopal ordination.<sup>78</sup> Those clergy refusing to subscribe to the Act were ejected in August 1662. The Church of England was once again a national church that would not tolerate religious plurality. Non-conformists, clerical and lay, were periodically harassed using Elizabethan penal laws and new legislation known to historians as the Clarendon code after Charles II's Chief Minister. The 1661 Corporation Act restricted public office to those in communion with the Church of England, which discouraged high ranking lay Puritans from taking the step into non-conformity. The Conventicle Act (1664) forbade five people or more, 'over and above those of the same household', to meet for religious worship.<sup>79</sup> While this did not preclude family prayer it did make the family prayers of non-conformists vulnerable to unfavourable interpretation; particularly if friends, neighbours, or relatives were in attendance. This is particularly true after the second Conventicle Act (1670) which increased the penalties and encouraged informers. Finally, the Five Mile Act of 1665 forbade ejected

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<sup>77</sup> Spurr, *The Restoration*, 30-6

<sup>78</sup> Watts, *The Dissenters*, 218-9; Spurr, *English Puritanism*, 130

<sup>79</sup> Watts, *The Dissenters*, 225-6; Spurr, *The Post Reformation*, 310

ministers from residing in communities where they had previously ministered and tried to prevent them from teaching or having lodgers.

Moderates were horrified to find themselves redefined as non-conformists or dissenters, especially Presbyterians who were firmly committed to the principle of a national church and had supported the restoration.<sup>80</sup> Some gentry resorted to occasional conformity and/or employing a non-conformist domestic chaplain to sidestep the legislation restricting public office and education to conforming Anglicans but also from a genuine desire to be part of the national church while continuing fulfilling domestic worship.<sup>81</sup> This was a compromise between spiritual needs and social and political aspirations. Gentry such as Sir Edward Harley embody this position as he conformed yet was also known as a ‘rigid Presbyterian and...has not moderation’ and appointed Anglicans to livings yet supported ejected ministers.<sup>82</sup> John Gell was a Puritan who attended Church of England services and held dissenting conventicles in his home.<sup>83</sup> For Harley, Gell, and others like them, household religion and family prayer undoubtedly occupied a vital position in their religious life and piety.

The following years vacillated between periods of persecution and renewed hopes of moderate Puritans for comprehension within the national church through an alteration to the terms of ordination and communion.<sup>84</sup> Such comprehension schemes were seriously considered in 1666-7, 1680, and 1689 but were defeated by a combination of Anglican resistance and ambivalence from the independent faction of dissent. Those who were unlikely

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<sup>80</sup> Spurr, *The Post Reformation*, 316; Spurr, *English Puritanism*, 131

<sup>81</sup> Tim Harris, “Introduction: Revising the Restoration” in *The Politics of Religion in Restoration England*, ed. Tim Harris, Paul Seaward, and Mark Goldie (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 18-21

<sup>82</sup> Key, “Comprehension and the Breakdown of Consensus”, 191, 195, 202. John Spurr identifies Lady Mary Armyne, and the Ashurst, Foley and Hampden families as other gentry who continued to patronize the godly cause, and Lord’s Holles and Wharton as aristocratic sympathisers. He considers families such as these to be the heirs to the early Stuart puritan gentry tradition. Spurr, *English Puritanism*, 144

<sup>83</sup> John Spurr identifies Sir John Gell as one Puritan Gentry-man who attended parish services and held dissenting conventicles in his home. Spurr, *English Puritanism*, 135

<sup>84</sup> Key, “Comprehension and the Breakdown of Consensus”, 192; Spurr, *English Puritanism*, 138

to be encompassed by any comprehension preferred to seek toleration.<sup>85</sup> The 1672 and 1687 Declarations of Indulgence permitted non-conformist public worship if the property owner and preacher applied for a licence. For moderates in favour of comprehension this presented a dilemma; taking advantage of the freedom of worship meant surrendering their hopes for comprehension into the national church, accepting the principle of religious plurality and therefore acknowledging their separatism.<sup>86</sup> Many godly also feared that indulgence would encourage Catholics and the sects.<sup>87</sup> This background forms the context of Richard Baxter's discussion of family religion in *A Christian Directory* published in 1673.

Baxter described himself as an Episcopal-Presbyterian-Independent in his *A third defence of the Cause of Peace*. He refused to conform at the restoration in protest at the exclusivity of the terms of the settlement and continued his ministry as a non-conformist, yet he nonetheless remained committed to the idea of a national church practising occasional conformity. His reputation was built on his commitment to developing the pastoral ministry and on his prolific production as an author of practical and catechetical divinity. He was identified as an opinion maker by the royalist camp in the last years of the interregnum; and rightly so as he was an influential and authoritative figure in godly circles.<sup>88</sup> Baxter's concern for family religion in *A Christian Directory* must be seen in relation to the issues of persecution and moderate puritan occasional conformity and Baxter's hopes for comprehension. The 1672 Declaration of Indulgence and its subsequent withdrawal provides the immediate context. Baxter viewed the declaration as the destruction of his hopes for comprehension in an inclusive national church.<sup>89</sup> He wanted to provide a programme for family religion that would satisfy the needs of the godly laity for intense religious worship, thereby discouraging them

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<sup>85</sup> Key, "Comprehension and the Breakdown of Consensus", 198; Watts, *The Dissenters*, 219

<sup>86</sup> Watts, *The Dissenters*, 247-8; Spurr, *English Puritanism*, 139

<sup>87</sup> Key, "Comprehension and the Breakdown of Consensus", 199

<sup>88</sup> N. H. Keeble, "Baxter, Richard (1615–1691)", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, Oct 2009, accessed 28 Jan 2017, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1734>

<sup>89</sup> Keeble, "Baxter, Richard (1615–1691)"

from separation from the established church. Baxter's defence of family worship also addressed the vulnerability of family prayer practices to accusations of holding conventicles.

Baxter deployed conventional arguments of the family as the fundamental unit of society but added a particular emphasis on the divine institution of families. Baxter argued that, as families are societies of God's institution furnished with special advantages and opportunities for worship, worship by families is of divine appointment.<sup>90</sup> The very law of nature requires families to worship God, as it requires that all societies worship their founder and head, and God was the institutor and is the head of every family. It is God's will that families who live in the presence of God, or are sanctified to God, should solemnly worship him. Each of Baxter's basic arguments is extensively expanded as he proves each dependent part.<sup>91</sup> After proving that worship in families in general is necessary, Baxter showed that the different practices of family worship 'are found, appointed, used, and commanded in the Scripture' which logic dictates 'it may well be concluded of the general' as well.<sup>92</sup> One of these practices is solemn prayer and Baxter's defence is a good example of his technique of layering up proofs.

Baxter proved that family prayer is of divine appointment, referring his readers back to the arguments for general family worship whilst adding new arguments. Christian families have convenient occasions and opportunities for prayer and it is God's will they should use them, evident in many scriptural precepts such as 'pray without ceasing', 'everywhere', and 'in everything'. For Baxter, general commands such as that above comprehend particulars such as praying in families.<sup>93</sup> Baxter also showed that God's command to ask for mercies means families must pray together for the blessings that they need and that it is most convenient for

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<sup>90</sup> Richard Baxter, *A Christian directory or, A summ of practical theologie and cases of conscience directing Christians how to use their knowledge and faith, how to improve all helps and means, and to perform all duties, how to overcome temptations, and to escape or mortifie every sin : in four parts*, (London: Printed by Robert White, 1673), 489, 494-5

<sup>91</sup> Baxter, *A Christian directory*, 495-8

<sup>92</sup> Baxter, *A Christian directory*, 498

<sup>93</sup> Baxter, *A Christian directory*, 500

family rulers to conduct family prayers, as he can then fulfil the command to see that those under his charge worship God. Scriptural example showed that God prefers the prayers of ‘many conjunct before the prayers...of those persons dividedly’ so it is therefore the duty of families to come together in prayer, just as it is their duty to accept God’s mercy in offering us access to joint prayer. Family prayer is ‘of God’ and the inclination to it is ‘from the spirit of God.’ Christian families are a church and, as all churches ought to solemnly pray to God, so must families combined. Finally, Baxter used arguments from scripture and early Christian history and answered numerous objections.<sup>94</sup> While none of Baxter’s arguments were necessarily unique, the force with which he put them, the painstakingly careful defence of each point, and the sheer extent of his arguments demonstrates how anxious he was to defend family prayer.

In addition to a robust defence of the practice, Baxter affirmed his commitment to public worship and envisaged family worship as a complement, not an alternative, to public worship. He described solitary prayer without communal prayer as ‘a kind of family schism...as it is a church-schism to separate from the church-assemblies and to pray in families only.’<sup>95</sup> Baxter emphasised that his vision of family religion was not divisive and demonstrated his rejection of separation. Baxter also recommended family worship as it benefits the wider church. Phrases such as ‘the holy government of families, is a considerable part of gods own government of the world’ stress the order and cohesiveness that Baxter believed family prayer could promote; denying that family prayer leads inexorably to dissent. By stressing order, duty, and patriarchal leadership of family religion, Baxter distanced himself from the radical sects. However, he also betrayed an awareness of the potential for family worship to be prejudicial to the established church. ‘It would be a great supply as to any defects in the pastors part, and a singular means to propagate and preserve Religion in

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<sup>94</sup> Baxter, *A Christian directory*, 501-7

<sup>95</sup> Baxter, *A Christian directory*, 506

times of public neglect or persecution' because in the home the master will have the freedom to teach the truth, pray spiritually and fervently, and keep 'as strict a discipline as you please.'<sup>96</sup> Perhaps this is part of a growing awareness that comprehension was not assured and the godly might need to look elsewhere for long term religious fulfilment. It is significant however that the household is the place to make up for the failings of the parish clergy not an alternative congregation.

Most of the Church of England Bishops opposed concessions to moderate non-conformists like Baxter and their attempts at comprehension. They had the support of the majority of the Anglican Cavalier Parliament and local gentry who welcomed back the pre-1640 Church of England as a familiar symbol of order and restoration. John Spurr believes that those zealous for the Church of England were a small clique able to exploit the desire of the larger population for security and stability. Widespread and deep-seated Anglican sensibilities had roots in the 1640s and 50s and the experiences of those decades had bred a mistrust of Puritanism and an indiscriminating attitude towards dissent; 'those who opposed dissenters vigorously continued to lump Presbyterians with radicals'.<sup>97</sup> This combination forced through the so-called Clarendon code of strict, narrow uniformity and persecution of plurality. The Church of England emerged from the 1640s and 50s with a distinct doctrinal, ecclesiological, and spiritual identity.<sup>98</sup> For historians such as Spurr and Maltby the experience of war and Interregnum were crucial to the solidifying of Anglicanism as an identity and was the source of the ecclesiology, theology, and piety of the Restoration Church of England.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Baxter, *A Christian directory*, 512-4

<sup>97</sup> Spurr, *The Restoration*, 32-3, 37, 39, 50; Harris, "Introduction: Revising the Restoration", 16; Key, "Comprehension and the Breakdown of Consensus", 208

<sup>98</sup> Spurr, *The Restoration*, xiv. See chapter 3 and 4 for Spurr's treatment of the restoration Church of England's attitudes to unity, conformity, the Roman Catholic Church and the dissenters, its episcopalianism and its authority in restoration religious life.

<sup>99</sup> Maltby, "Suffering and surviving", 174

The post-Restoration resurgence of the Church of England was seen by many churchmen as an opportunity to promote a new morality and high standard of personal piety. The experiences of the Interregnum infused Anglican spirituality with a sombre penitential mood. Personal piety was a positive response to the interregnum tribulations interpreted as God's punishment for the nation's sins.<sup>100</sup> The Anglican clergy were dismayed by what they saw as the decay of Christian piety; apostasy, blasphemy, and atheism caused by a lack of the orthodox word, sacraments, and disappointment at false prophets.<sup>101</sup> They preached and published their message of devotional zeal, repentance, and reform and identified themselves so closely with their message and its divine source that anyone who was deaf to the clergy were presumed to be deaf to God. From this rhetoric emerged the conviction that bad opinions were the result of a bad life and that 'all the church's enemies, atheists, Dissenters and Papists, were associated in sin' and were morally deficient.<sup>102</sup> The personal piety of individuals had its part to play in the reform of the nation and, while this was largely expressed through public worship on days of thanksgiving and humiliation, devotional zeal was not for these days alone. Restoration Anglican preaching and publishing offered guidance on living a holy life, including pocket sized manuals that set out a regime of personal devotion.<sup>103</sup> The works of Jeremy Taylor and *The Whole Duty of Man* remained influential and were published repeatedly throughout this period. They were joined by many others.

Like the earlier works of Taylor and Allestree, the post-Restoration Anglican devotionals surveyed by Spurr assume a personal and family piety anchored around the Church and

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<sup>100</sup> Maltby, "Suffering and surviving", 20-22, 30

<sup>101</sup> Maltby, "Suffering and surviving", 24

<sup>102</sup> Maltby, "Suffering and surviving", 234-6, 269-70; Harris, "Introduction: Revising the Restoration", 17

<sup>103</sup> John Spurr, "Virtue, Religion and Government: The Anglican Uses of Providence" in *The Politics of Religion in Restoration England*, ed. Tim Harris, Paul Seaward, and Mark Goldie (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 37



public worship.<sup>104</sup> As Spurr notes this is most obvious in the works which draw directly upon the *Book of Common Prayer*. Numerous works published in the post-Restoration period drew upon and repackaged content from the *Book of Common Prayer* for use in family and personal devotions. William Howell's *The Common Prayer Book the Best Companion in the House and Closet as well as in the Temple* published in 1687 took prayers from the liturgy for use in family and solitary devotions. Bishop Turner of Ely encouraged his clergy to recommend Howell's work to their laity believing it would 'secure the keeping up sober religion in *private* families, and in closets, while it also brings the people to a good liking, pious using, and easily remembering of those same prayers, which at other times they shall hear read in your *churches*.'<sup>105</sup> Howell felt that no Church had ever made better provision for the worship of God than the Church of England in the Prayer Book supplying as it did 'our private necessities in all common and ordinary cases; but that in most particular occurrences likewise, which as unusual and extraordinary'.<sup>106</sup> Many other writers composed and offered prayers for use in the family, including the anonymous *Domestic Devotions for the Use of Families and of Particular Persons* (1683), *Preparations to a Holy Life: or Devotions for Families & Private Persons* (1684), and John Meriton in his *Forms of prayer for every day in the week, morning and evening composed for the use of private families* (1682).<sup>107</sup>

The authors of these works were careful to remind their readers that family worship should not replace public duties in the Church. William Howell wrote 'neither can the doing of it in public atone for the neglect of it in private, nor the private performance on the other hand any way excuse the contempt of the public'. The anonymous author of *Domestic Devotions* called

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<sup>104</sup> Spurr, *The Restoration*, 343

<sup>105</sup> Francis Turner, *A Letter to the Clergy of the Diocese of Ely from the Bishop of Ely. Before and Prefatory to his Visitation*, (Cambridge: Printed by J. Hayes, 1686), 14-15, quoted in Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England*, 341

<sup>106</sup> William Howell, *The Common Prayer Book the best companion in the house and closet as well as in the temple*, (Oxford: printed at the Theater, 1687), preface

<sup>107</sup> Ginn, *The Politics of Prayer in Early Modern Britain*, 126-36 mentions these examples.

the public service 'the more eminent part of our Christian Devotion'.<sup>108</sup> The message was that family worship should be a complement to, not a replacement for, the public worship of God in church. Simon Patrick tackled this issue head on in his preface to *The Devout Christian*. He wrote 'Nor shall I go about to show how much the Publick Service of God in his own house is to be preferred before the private Devotion of Families at home', believing that it is self-evident.<sup>109</sup> While for Patrick the value of family worship is obvious he was concerned that his message and intention in writing the book might be misinterpreted. Patrick did not miss an opportunity to remind his readers of the pre-eminence of public worship.<sup>110</sup> Patrick was blunt about why this should be; so many have been 'bold and rude', 'rash', 'untrue', 'doubtful', and 'licentious' in the 'rambles of their fancy in suddain Prayer' that they 'blast the credit' of the performance of family prayer.<sup>111</sup> He argued that its abuse by overzealous non-conformists had called into question the practice of family prayer itself and that in distancing themselves from the anarchy of the sects, Anglicans had thrown the proverbial baby out with the bathwater.

Patrick, like other Anglican authors of this period, did not discuss the mechanics of family worship. The main text is a series of prayers for use at different times of day and occasions. There is no accompanying or explanatory text beyond the prayer titles, and the prayers themselves are the only guide to the performance of family prayer. By using this approach the writers sought to maintain control over household worship; discouraging what they saw as the excesses of extemporary family worship. Yet there is little guidance for their lay readers about important matters such as how to perform the prayers, where, when, and with whom. Perhaps this is intentional; encouraging readers to fall back on their experience of public

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<sup>108</sup> Anon, *Domestic Devotions for the Use of Families and of Particular Persons* (1683), 179

<sup>109</sup> Simon Patrick, *The devout Christian instructed how to pray and give thanks to God, or, A book of devotions for families and for particular persons in most of the concerns of humane life*, (London: Printed for R. Royston, 1673), Sig.A4 preface

<sup>110</sup> Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England*, 343

<sup>111</sup> Patrick, *The devout Christian*, Sig.A4v

worship as a guide or to consult a cleric, although it could have driven lay people to other works such as those from the early seventeenth century, like Lewis Bayly's *Practice of Pietie* with its detailed instructions.

## 1689 - 1700

The Act of Toleration received royal assent from William III on 24 May 1689. This act exempted Trinitarian Protestant dissenters who took oaths of allegiance and supremacy, and obtained a licence, from the punishments of the Elizabethan penal laws and the Conventicle Act. Clergy who subscribed to thirty-six of the thirty-nine articles were exempt from the Act of Uniformity and the Five Mile Act. While the Act of Toleration allowed for freedom of worship and from persecution, dissenters did not attain civil equality as the Test Act and Corporation Act, which restricted the holding of public office to those who took communion in the Church of England at least once a year, remained in force.<sup>112</sup> The Church of England was transformed from the national church to the established church; one of a number of competing alternatives.<sup>113</sup> This institutionalised the reality of religious plurality that had existed for several decades. It gave added impetus to the Church of England programme of moral reform and the message of personal piety; they must outshine non-conformist hypocrites in sincere piety.<sup>114</sup> Restoration providentialism and its programme of personal piety bore fruit in the 1690s moral revolution, yet the church struggled to retain control of the initiative from the laity and non-conformists. This forms the background to John Tillotson's sermon on family religion published in *Six Sermons* in 1694.

Tillotson, Archbishop of Canterbury, sought to redefine zealous and conscientious family religion from a defining hallmark of non-conformism to establish it firmly in the Church of England mainstream. He bewailed that family worship is 'strangely overlooked and neglected

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<sup>112</sup> Watts, *The Dissenters*, 259-60

<sup>113</sup> Spurr, *The Restoration*, 104

<sup>114</sup> Spurr, *The Restoration*, 264

in this loose and degenerate age in which we live' and he places the blame for this squarely on dissenters and differences in religion. He claimed that 'some will not meet at the same prayers in the family...and under the colour of serving god in a different way according to their consciences, do either wholly or in great measure neglect the worship of god'. In effect, he labelled non-conformists as hypocrites who use the excuse of conscience to avoid performing their religious duties in families. The consequence is that 'careful masters of families' find it impossible to religiously order and govern their families. This should 'convince us of the necessity of endeavouring a greater union in matters of religion' and 'put us in mind of those happy days when [families] were united in their worship and devotion both in their own houses and in the house of God.'<sup>115</sup> In a sense, Church of England approaches to household worship came full circle, arriving back at an appreciation of the role family prayer can play in the health of the wider church. The emphasis is slightly different however, as Tillotson associates family prayer with religious uniformity and orthodoxy by comparing families unified in family prayer to the church unified in common prayer. The spectre of unordered and ungoverned families caused by puritan hypocrisy further cements the link Tillotson is pushing between family prayer, religious orthodoxy, and the stability of the social and political order.

By suggesting that family prayer is neglected, Tillotson echoed the opinion of other authors throughout the century. By the 1690s, however, family worship was utilised in ideological ways. Establishment figures tried to discredit non-conformist family religion as seditious and hypocritical. Tillotson used his sermon to bolster the authority of orthodox Anglicanism by presenting select aspects of family religion: prayer; the reading of scripture and other religious books, recommending works by Arminian authors such as Richard Allestree; and

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<sup>115</sup> John Tillotson, *Six Sermons I, Stedfastness in religion. II. Family-Religion. III.IV.V. Education of children VI. The advantages of an early piety: preached in the church of St. Lawrence Juey in London*, (London: Printed for B. Aylmer, and W. Rogers, 1694), 40; 55-8

family instruction, as a means to plant fundamental principles of religion and dissuade families from doubtful doctrines and 'notions of a sect'.<sup>116</sup> Family religion's relationship to conformity and loyalty to the state is the only argument Tillotson marshals in its favour.

During the interregnum, the puritan tradition had dissolved into a multiplicity of denominational groups which became progressively more defined and distinct in the Restoration years. By the late seventeenth century the position of moderates and conciliators became increasingly untenable as the gap between even moderate non-conformism and Anglicanism grew.<sup>117</sup> Reluctant clerical conformists gradually came to identify more and more with Anglican modes of piety and a new generation of clerics, trained at the Restoration universities, were beginning to replace them.<sup>118</sup> The 'Old Puritan' tradition, moderate non-conformists who hoped for a return to a broad-based national church, had drawn much of their identity and cohesion from the personal leadership of notable ministers, especially those ejected in 1662. These men were now dying out; the historian M. R. Watts labelled Baxter 'the last of the Puritans'.<sup>119</sup> The new generation of moderate non-conformists were more realistic and accepted their status as dissenters and came to identify more with other dissenting churches than to seek to distance themselves from them. The historian N. Keeble argued the shared experience of persecution created dissent out of the various non-conformities of 1660.<sup>120</sup> As hopes of comprehension following the revolution dimmed with the 1689 Toleration Act, Puritans had to face a future on the spectrum of non-conformist denominations.

Samuel Slater's discussion of family religion and prayer are grounded in the context of the London dissenting community in the 1690s. Slater's 1672 licence to preach identified him as

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<sup>116</sup> Tillotson, *Six Sermons*, 39, 43, 60

<sup>117</sup> Spurr, *The Restoration*, 70

<sup>118</sup> Spurr, *The Restoration*, 82-3

<sup>119</sup> Watts, *The Dissenters*, 255; Spurr, *English Puritanism*, 149

<sup>120</sup> Spurr, *English Puritanism*, 140

a Presbyterian and he ministered to Presbyterian congregations in Essex and London. Slater was typical of later seventeenth century moderate non-conformists who turned away from hopes of comprehension with the Church of England to promote unity between London's dissenters.<sup>121</sup> In *An Earnest Call to Family Religion* Slater presented the traditional defence of family prayer as 'necessary for the promoting of publick and common good' in city, kingdom and 'Religion', for 'Families are the first Bodies out of which greater Societies and Communities do arise, and of which they are compos'd. Churches, Towns, Cities, Kingdoms are made up of Families.'<sup>122</sup> It is significant though that 'churches' is plural and that family prayer is beneficial to 'Religion' not the church. This defence of family prayer based on the public good is, however, overshadowed by motivations drawn from nature, scripture, and God's commands which dominate and are fore-grounded in the text.

While none of these arguments are strictly new, the emphasis placed on them and the space devoted to them, over one hundred and fifty pages, is significant. In contrast the arguments based on the analogy between family, state and church, are covered in less than eight pages. In the context of late seventeenth century heterodoxy in religion, focus shifted away from the church, as this could no longer be monolithically defined and Slater's readers might be drawn from a number of different denominational backgrounds. An increasing attention to scriptural command and example in later seventeenth century writing from the puritan tradition may have derived from a desire to strengthen the defence of family prayer as it came to be viewed as a potentially suspect practice by the political and ecclesiastical authorities. Family prayer was increasingly presented as an inalienable duty and command from God, just as it is under scrutiny.

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<sup>121</sup> Jim Benedict, "Slater, Samuel (1629?–1704)", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, accessed 28 Jan 2017, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25717>

<sup>122</sup> Samuel Slater, *An Earnest Call to Family Religion, or, A discourse concerning family-worship being the substance of eighteen sermons*, (London: Printed for Tho. Parkhurst and John Lawrence, 1694), 158-61

## Conclusion

This brief journey establishes a chronological framework for prescriptive theory of domestic and family religion to refer to when examining its component practices. While the basic components of the arguments in favour of family religion are evident across the seventeenth century, each of the authors had a different emphasis which reflected the religious and political context in which they were writing. These changes of emphasis have helped map attitudes to family religion throughout the period and across the religious spectrum. Family religion is one window through which to view the vicissitudes of seventeenth century religion. Changes in the religious and political situation are shown to impact domestic devotion and the prescriptive theory of family religion. The prescriptive writings reveal tensions around certain issues at particular times. During certain periods of tension, for example in the 1630s and post-restoration, establishment fears of seditious conventicles influenced their approach to family religion. Moderate Puritans meanwhile reacted to this suspicion by disassociating themselves in their writing from those who really were holding conventicles.

Of course the continuities are just as important as change. The continuities in the puritan defences of family religion lend support to the historian John Spurr's belief that what made a Puritan in 1603 still made one in 1689.<sup>123</sup> Successive generations of divines published recommendations of, and guides to, family religion suggesting that family prayer remained at the centre of godly piety throughout the period. Samuel Slater expressed this continuity in his popular works to combat the destruction of 'old-fashioned godliness' enacted by 'hot contentions for lifeless forms and ceremonies not worth a button'.<sup>124</sup> In addition to the nostalgia for old certainties this phrase seeks to claim succession from the early seventeenth

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<sup>123</sup> Spurr, *English Puritanism*, 202

<sup>124</sup> Samuel Slater, *A discourse of closet (or secret) prayer from Matt. VI 6 first preached and now published at the request of those that heard it*, (London: Printed for Jonathan Robinson and Tho. Cockerill, 1691), preface

century era of relative consensus. Slater asserts himself and his co-religionists as heirs to that Calvinist tradition. The next chapter will see how this continuity translated to the detail of prescriptive advice on household religion and, more importantly, actual practice.

The conformist and Anglican works show that, despite reservations at times, family religion was just as important to that tradition. However, conformist and Anglican attitudes took a more circuitous route throughout the seventeenth century, from outright suspicion through acceptance to positive adoption in John Tillotson's sermons. What is consistent across the period is that writers from this tradition paid close attention to the relationship between family and public devotion, and emphatically asserted the primacy of public duties. Family worship was valuable but the measure of the religiously ordered family was the householder's provision for, and insistence on, public worship. The following chapter will see how this influenced their prescriptive advice on the mechanics of family worship and actual practice.



## Chapter 3: FAMILY PRAYER AND COMMUNAL DEVOTIONS

This chapter will focus on the mechanics of family worship and consider the who, what, when, where, and how. This is where we move beyond abstract notions of family religion to the substance of actual practices. Family prayer stands as the central practice of household religion as well as the most basic. If a household performed any communal devotion it was going to be family prayer. Family prayer therefore justifies significant attention. To establish the place of family prayer in the scheme of worship and devotion, I explore the relationship between public, family, and individual or secret prayer. A closer look at the debate on extemporary and set forms of prayer proved to be a useful frame for considering the what or how of family prayer: how was it performed and what did it consist of? To conclude the exploration of family prayer I consider its mechanics: the timing, location, and participants. This chapter moves on to other communal domestic devotional practices. Family prayer is shown to be part of a complex framework of domestic religious practices performed in company including psalm singing, religious reading, sermon repetition, and catechising. These are the ordinary practices of domestic religion; those which form the routine, regular, and unremarkable elements of domestic religion.

Each part of the chapter below will examine the prescriptive advice of clerical authors followed by glimpses of lived experience. It will become apparent that most of the prescriptive advice hails from authors leaning towards the puritan end of the mainstream religious spectrum. As discussed in the previous chapter, most of the conformist authors refrain from detailed instruction on the practice of family prayer, preferring instead to focus on forms for use or emulation.

As recently as 2007 Richard Ginn commented on how little attention historians had paid to family prayer.<sup>1</sup> Alec Ryrie subsequently discussed family prayer in the early seventeenth century so I have concentrated my efforts on the later seventeenth century.<sup>2</sup> This chapter will explore to what extent practice followed prescriptive guidelines and what this tells us, and will also begin to unpick the role of domestic religion in the creation, maintenance, and projection of family religious identity.

### **Types of prayer**

The previous chapter examined how conformist and Anglican writers encouraged and instructed family religion, yet appeared to be ambivalent about it. They betray a concern that, while family prayer had many benefits, it could also serve as an alternative to public prayer to the detriment of the national church. By the second half of the century, authors such as Simon Patrick and John Tillotson felt family prayer had become tainted by its association with non-conformism.<sup>3</sup> Such authors set out to reclaim family prayer for orthodoxy by emphasising its subordination to public prayer. They firmly inscribe it within an economy of prayer where public prayer is the climax to which all practice leads.

However, this concern was not exclusive to the Anglican tradition; writers from the puritan tradition were also concerned with the relationship between different types of prayer. Early in the century Richard Bernard advocated the setting up of family exercises as ‘these make publike means more profitable.’ In 1640, George Downname strongly asserted the pre-eminence of public prayer, writing that private prayer ‘must give place to the publick’.<sup>4</sup> Philip Goodwin, writing in 1655, described public and family duties as the two legs of a Christian, or the two wings of the church mutually supporting one another; ‘by private duties

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<sup>1</sup> Ginn, *The Politics of Prayer in Early Modern Britain*, 126

<sup>2</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*

<sup>3</sup> See above, 68.

<sup>4</sup> Bernard, *Josuahs Godly Resolution*, 27; George Downname, *A godly and leamed treatise of prayer which both conteineth in it the doctrine of prayer, and also sheweth the practice of it in the exposition of the Lords prayer*, (Cambridge: By Roger Daniel for Nicolas Bourn, 1640), 152

a man prepares himself for profit by publicke ordinances; and the profit he gets by ordinances in publick, he keeps by the following performance of private duties.’<sup>5</sup> As we saw in the previous chapter, puritan authors slowly came to terms with the reality of religious plurality and non-conformism in the latter years of the century. Richard Baxter tried to balance the expectations and needs of his readership with maintaining his stance on comprehension. He advised readers to ‘prefer publick prayer, though the manner were more imperfect than your own.’<sup>6</sup> Baxter was committed to the concept of an inclusive national church, albeit along more reformed lines, and was therefore adamant that household religion complemented, not replaced, public worship. Samuel Slater asserted at the end of the century that ‘the conscientious performance of religious duties in families is an excellent means for the rendering of publick ordinances more successful.’<sup>7</sup> These authors emphasized the importance of public prayer to refute suggestions that rigorous household religion leads to the neglect of public worship, or that separate and gathered churches are the inevitable conclusion. That is not to say that they did not genuinely value public prayer and the role family prayer played in preparation for it.

Rarely are the different types of prayer considered together. Ryrie's recent study is notable in that it discussed personal, liturgical, and household prayer; yet it did not explore the relationship and links between these prayers. Generally I have avoided the terms ‘public’ and ‘private’ prayer due to our complicated understanding of those terms. Seventeenth century writers felt no such compunction. ‘Public’ was commonly used to refer to liturgical prayer. ‘Private’ was often used to refer to acts of communal prayer within the home; however both ‘family prayer’ and ‘household prayer’ were also used and have been preferred here. ‘Private prayer’ was also sometimes used in relation to personal prayer. I have opted for ‘domestic

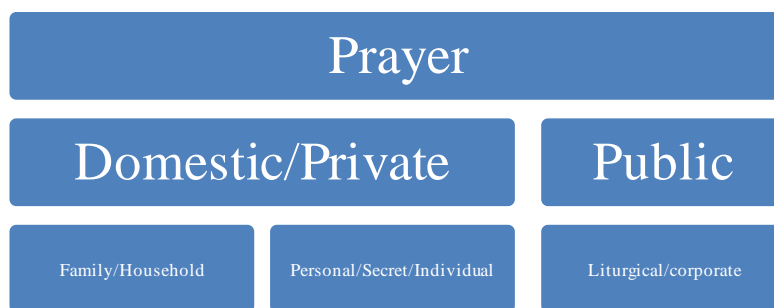
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<sup>5</sup> Goodwin, *Religio domestica rediviva*, 115, 210, 40

<sup>6</sup> Baxter, *A Christian directory*, 598

<sup>7</sup> Slater, *An Earnest Call to Family Religion*, 161

prayer' to collectively refer to both communal and individual prayer in the home. Finally, contemporaries also used 'closet prayer' or 'secret prayer' for personal prayer. These terms are problematic for the historian with their strong connotations of privacy and solitude. As we will see; 'privacy', in our understanding of the term, was rarely sought and even more rarely achieved. To avoid this, 'personal' or 'individual' prayer is preferred throughout despite these terms not being used in the seventeenth century. Figure 2 visualises a breakdown of the types and terminology for prayer.



**Figure 2: Types and terminology of prayer**

Late seventeenth century non-conformist author Samuel Slater shows the complicated economy of prayer:

The other Expression most pertinent to our present business, is, *with all prayer and supplication*, i.e. with ordinary prayer, and with extraordinary too, that which hath fasting joined with it: private prayer and publick too; ejaculatory prayer, when the Soul allies out on a sudden unto God, gives him a visit, and alway, knocks at his door, puts in a short Petition, and is gone, like one that is engaged about some other business, and cannot stay: and also composed Prayer, in which the Soul fixeth and abides some considerable time with God: Family-prayer, and Closet-prayer; Prayer in conjunction with others, and alone by ourselves. We may, and must, make use of all these kinds of Prayers as opportunity offers, and occasions do require.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Slater, *A discourse of closet (or secret) prayer*, 18

Prescriptive authors expressed anxiety that personal prayer would replace or overshadow family prayer. Readers are reminded by Oliver Heywood and Samuel Slater that personal prayer must not shut out family prayer and ‘god never made one duty to supersede another; you must not jostle out one work, because you are bound to perform another’.<sup>9</sup> Baxter distinguished between those who led family prayer and those who did not. Those who do not speak in family prayer will have more need of personal prayer, but masters who lead family prayer may make do with that and ‘put up the same requests as they would do in secret’ with secret ejaculations.<sup>10</sup> Family prayer is prioritised over personal prayer. Bayly's *Practice of Pietie* calls for personal prayer to be completed before family prayer. He further warns ‘remember so to dispatch these private preparations and duties, as that thou and thy family may be in the Church, before the beginning of praier. Else your private exercises are rather an hinderance then a preparation’.<sup>11</sup> Secret prayer is, according to Baxter, to ‘go before the common prayers of the family’ because praying alone fits one for praying in the company of one's family.<sup>12</sup> As family prayer was preparation for liturgical prayer, personal prayer was preparation for family prayer. Prayer was a contiguous cycle with the three main types – public, family, and individual – feeding in to one another.

### **Performing family prayer**

Attitudes concerning the balance of public and private prayer were related to another set of attitudes towards set or extemporary forms of prayer. Some post-Restoration Anglican writers such as Simon Patrick felt that non-conformist excesses of extemporary prayer, or the ‘rambles of their fancy in suddain prayer’ had harmed the reputation of family prayer.<sup>13</sup> Set

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<sup>9</sup> Oliver Heywood, *Closet-Prayer a Christian-duty, or, A Treatise upon Mat. 6,6. tending to prove that worship of god in secret is the indispensable duty of all Christians...: together with a severe rebuke of Christians for their neglect of, or negligence in the duty of closet-prayer, and many directions for the managing thereof*, (London: Printed for Tho. Parkhurst, 1671), 90-1; Slater, *A discourse of Secret Prayer*, 167

<sup>10</sup> Baxter, *A Christian directory*, 594

<sup>11</sup> Bayly, *The Practise of Pietie*, 590-1

<sup>12</sup> Baxter, *A Christian directory*, 565

<sup>13</sup> Simon Patrick, *The devout Christian*, The Preface, sig.A4r

prayer in the domestic setting would involve either reciting or reading written prayers. It could involve the use of the *Book of Common Prayer* or reading prayers provided in the prescriptive or devotional literature. Extemporaneous prayer, meanwhile, involved composing prayer as it was performed, moved by the Holy Spirit to converse with God on behalf of oneself and one's family. As we will see, there were shades of difference around these poles.

Historians have long followed seventeenth century debates over the use of set forms and extemporaneous prayer in the liturgical setting of the parish church.<sup>14</sup> Simply put, conformists and Anglicans defended the liturgy of the *Book of Common Prayer* while Puritans wished to see a modified liturgy that gave space to extemporaneous or 'scripturally inspired pastoral prayer'.<sup>15</sup> However, recent work has emphasised that before 1640 the picture was less clear cut.<sup>16</sup> In a domestic setting historians agree that both conformist and puritan traditions allowed the use of extemporaneous and set forms. Cynthia Garrett counsels 'this is not to suggest...perfect harmony over the use of set and spontaneous private prayer, but such disagreement as exists, even between the representatives of extreme views within each faction, centers on the relative, rather than exclusive, merits of each'.<sup>17</sup>

Ian Green pushed the debate in a different direction, suggesting that in the early seventeenth century puritan and conformist clergy alike saw set prayers as the crutch of piety for weaker Christians; an acceptable alternative to the ideal extemporaneous prayer guided by the Holy Spirit.<sup>18</sup> For Green there was much 'common ground on the importance of domestic

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<sup>14</sup> Horton Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans*, (London: Dacre Press, 1948), 98-114; Christopher Durston, "By the book or with the spirit: the debate over liturgical prayer during the English Revolution", *Historical Research*, 79, no 203, (2006): 50-73; Ginn, *The Politics of Prayer in Early Modern Britain*, 28-39

<sup>15</sup> Cynthia Garrett, "The Rhetoric of Supplication: Prayer Theory in Seventeenth-Century England", *Renaissance Quarterly*, 46, no 2 (1993): 349

<sup>16</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 214-5; Judith Maltby, "Extravagancies and Impertinence: Set Forms, Conceived and Extempore Prayer in Revolutionary England" in *Worship and the Parish Church in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Natalie Mears and Alec Ryrie, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 221-230

<sup>17</sup> Garrett, "The Rhetoric of Supplication", 349, n29

<sup>18</sup> Ian Green, "New for Old? Clerical and Lay Attitudes to Domestic Prayer in Early Modern England", *Reformation & Renaissance Review*, 10, no 2, (2008): 202-3

prayer...and of the acceptability of set forms for each day of the week'.<sup>19</sup> Calvinist William Perkins wrote that Christians needed the 'gifts of memory, knowledge, utterance, and ... grace' to conceive a form of prayer, and those wanting such gifts 'may lawfully use a set form of prayers, as a man with a weak back or a lame leg may lean on a crutch.'<sup>20</sup> Green wrote of a clerical campaign to persuade the laity to pursue this ideal and attain the gift of extemporary prayer which peaked between 1590 and 1640.<sup>21</sup> Green identifies a shift in opinion among conformist clergy only after the Restoration: arguments against extemporary prayer, previously applied only to public prayer, began to be utilised in the domestic arena.<sup>22</sup> After 1640, the gap between puritan and conformist practice may have widened but early seventeenth century collections of prayers remained popular and were joined by new collections, filling a gap created by the outlawing of the *Book of Common Prayer*.<sup>23</sup> Green concludes that 'lay caution and political events had had the effect of dampening concerted attempts at more radical change by the clergy'.<sup>24</sup>

Arguing for common acceptance of set forms in the domestic setting masks the variety of opinion on how desirable they were. Green probably overstates the appetite among conformist clergy for extemporary prayer and the comfort of puritan clergy with set forms. William Perkins may have felt set forms were acceptable but he insisted 'a man is not bound in conscience to use a forme of words' and 'the spirit is said to pray in the elect with groaness that cannot be uttered'.<sup>25</sup> This is very different to John Cosin who described extemporal prayer as 'irkesome and indigested' and uses Matthew 6. 7-9 to prove that Christ set a form to

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<sup>19</sup> Green, "New for Old", 204

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in: Green, "New for Old", 201

<sup>21</sup> Green, "New for Old", 199-222; 215

<sup>22</sup> Green, "New for Old", 219

<sup>23</sup> Green, "New for Old", 217

<sup>24</sup> Green, "New for Old", 221

<sup>25</sup> William Perkins, *The Whole Treatise of The Cases of Conscience printed in The workes of that famous and vvorthy minister of Christ in the Vniversitie of Cambridge, M. VVilliam Perkins. The second volume. Newly corrected according to his owne copies. VVith distinct chapters, and contents of every booke prefixed: and two tables of the whole adjoynd; one of the matters and questions, the other of choice places of Scriptures*, (London: 1631), 66-67

be used in both public and private prayers. Although Cosin did not condemn 'all sudden and godly ejaculations' he believed acceptable prayers are framed 'by them that best know what belong thereunto'.<sup>26</sup> The conformist Lancelot Andrewes outlined the attributes which make extemporary prayer acceptable to God, yet he did not criticise set forms and went out of his way to analyse The Lord's Prayer as an ideal set form.<sup>27</sup> Surprisingly, the Puritan George Downname conceded that extemporary prayer is commendable where there is absence of spiritual pride, but believed set forms 'more profitable for the hearers, who with a known form may easily concur in prayer with the speaker.'<sup>28</sup> The kaleidoscope of views defies easy categorisation even before the 1640s.

During the Interregnum John Wilkins, a moderate puritan, encouraged ordinary Christians to work to attain the gift of prayer but because during family prayer 'we are to be the mouth of others, then our businesse must be to engage their affections that joyn with us and therefore our expressions here should be so proper and deliberate'.<sup>29</sup> Baxter advocated the use of set forms for family prayer pointing out that God had not forbidden it.<sup>30</sup> It was lawful to perform extemporary family prayer, although Baxter insisted that even with free prayer 'we must premeditate on our wants, and sins, and the graces and mercies we desire.'<sup>31</sup> The larger the group gathered in prayer 'the more regard you must have to the fitness of your expressions: for before others, words must be regarded, lest they be scandalized, and God and prayer be dishonoured. And if you cannot do it competently without, use a well composed form.' Set forms posed their own risks, however. Their use must be adapted 'to the case of those that

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<sup>26</sup> John Cosin, *A collection of private devotions in the practise of the ancient church*, (London: Printed by R. Young, 1627), Sig. A5-A7

<sup>27</sup> Lancelot Andrewes, *Scala Coeli. Nineteen sermons concerning prayer*, (London: Printed by N. O. for Francis Burton, 1611); Lancelot Andrewes, *Institutiones piaae, or directions to pray*, (London: Printed by Felix Kingston for Henry Seile, 1630)

<sup>28</sup> Downname, *A Godly and Learned Treatise of Prayer*, 140

<sup>29</sup> John Wilkins, *A Discourse concerning the gift of prayer shewing what it is, wherein it consists, and how far it is attainable by industry*, (London: Printed by T.R. and E.M. for Samuel Gellibrand, 1653)

<sup>30</sup> Baxter, *A Christian directory*, 591

<sup>31</sup> Baxter, *A Christian directory*, 592



joyn in it, and to the condition of the family'.<sup>32</sup> Baxter recommended early seventeenth century practical works as aids to prayer, such as the works of Preston, Perkins, Sibbes, Dent, and especially Bayly's *The Practise of Piety*.<sup>33</sup> Authors such as Wilkins and Baxter were mindful of the perceived excesses of separatists during the Interregnum and used family prayer to assert alternative images of puritan order. Both authors were involved in the project to incorporate moderate dissent within the framework of the church.<sup>34</sup> Baxter was particularly anxious to advocate a middle way, and his attitude to set forms used in family prayer is typical of his pastoral concern for ordinary Christians' understanding of their religious duties; and the value he placed on order and authority in religion. The choice of *The Practise of Pietie* as a key guide underlines this as the work was popular across the religious spectrum and Bayly had been a bishop in the early Stuart Church.

Towards the close of the century, however, Samuel Slater was less accommodating of set forms. He advised his audience not to 'in your families confine and tye up your selves to a form of prayer' for who knows the condition and wants of a family better than its governor?<sup>35</sup> By 1694, it was clear that non-conformity was not a precursor to the restoration of church unity and therefore Slater had no reason to moderate any of his opinions regarding the use of set forms in family prayer. Equally, the advice of the Anglicans had distilled down to a commendation of set forms. While not actually condemning free prayer outright, John Tillotson, Archbishop of Canterbury, recommended the use of 'excellent helps to this purpose' including *The Whole Duty of Man*, Richard Allestree's book of practical theology,

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<sup>32</sup> Baxter, *A Christian directory*, 598-9

<sup>33</sup> Baxter, *A Christian directory*, 581

<sup>34</sup> Wilkins was the grandson of the Puritan luminary John Dod and was influenced by his theology yet following the restoration conformed. Wilkins led the latitudinarian party within the church, those who believed in conforming but for whom doctrinal, liturgical and ecclesiological matters were relatively unimportant, and was a proponent of comprehension. John Henry, "Wilkins, John (1614–1672)", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, Oct 2009, accessed 2 Feb 2014, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29421>

<sup>35</sup> Slater, *An Earnest Call to Family Religion*, 199, 202

and other 'short forms of prayer and praise'.<sup>36</sup> By this time Anglicans were promoting the practice of family prayer using forms such as the *Book of Common Prayer* or collections of prayers by mid-century conformist authors such as Allestree and Jeremy Taylor.

Set and extemporary forms of prayer were respectively aligned with two principles of prayer: that it should be reverent, yet fervent. Prayer should at once be full of emotion and earnestness, but should also convey appropriate respect for God. Attitudes to set and extemporary prayer were conditioned by the respective importance laid on these two principles. For instance, Baxter insisted that family prayer must be 'reverently, seriously and spiritually done' but the householder should also 'let not the coldness and dullness of the speaker rock the family sleep: but keep waken your own heart, that you may keep the rest awake, and force them to attention.'<sup>37</sup> Ryrie points out that impossible contradiction, commenting that 'It would be enough to drive anyone to set forms'.<sup>38</sup>

How was this complex mix of advice translated into practice? Ian Green and Alec Ryrie point to the vast production of published prayer books by clerical and lay authors from all backgrounds catering for a significant demand for set forms of prayer among the laity.<sup>39</sup> However, Ryrie sees set forms in printed collections of prayers as just the beginning of a sophisticated adoption and adaptation by lay people. Lay people selected and blended their prayers from a wide range of sources; memorising set forms, conceiving their own prayers using detailed frameworks provided in the prayer books, and fleshing out skeleton prayers to their individual needs.<sup>40</sup> The reality of family prayer was a fluid mix of set and extemporary forms, utilised and adapted to suit the circumstances of each individual family. It is striking that the famed Puritan John Bruen was celebrated in his godly life for using set forms in

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<sup>36</sup> Tillotson, *Six Sermons*, 39, 48

<sup>37</sup> Baxter, *A Christian directory*, 566, 598

<sup>38</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 217

<sup>39</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 219; Green, "New for Old", 202-5

<sup>40</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 221-232

family prayer. His godly life included an interlude on the acceptability of set prayer, indicating the controversial nature of this point. Perhaps this was interposed by Samuel Hinde when he prepared his father William's *Life* of John Bruen for publication in 1641.

The Harley family and their local ministers used extemporary prayer in Brampton Bryan church. In a letter probably dating to 1640, Stanley Gower outlined a series of proposals for Sir Robert Harley to promote at Parliament; including the use of extemporary prayers at the sacrament.<sup>41</sup> A couple of years earlier, Gower had been accused of a number of non-conformist practices; significantly, the omission of large parts of the Prayer Book service and conducting extemporary prayer during self-appointed fast days.<sup>42</sup> Sir Robert was accused of condoning and encouraging Gower in his non-conformity. Undated notes in the Harley archive discuss forms of prayer. While forms of prayer in scripture are 'warrantable to be used because they are divine forms, yet not always necessary to be used', set form of words are declared to be 'superstitious'.<sup>43</sup> It seems likely, therefore, that the Harleys would have also favoured extemporary prayer in the domestic setting.

Sir Robert Harley used lists to structure his prayers, and several such lists are preserved among his papers. The lists contain subjects to pray for, confessions to own, blessings to give thanksgiving for, and biblical references to incorporate into the prayers. Each set of notes includes some, or all, of these elements.<sup>44</sup> Historian Jacqueline Eales has characterised these notes as survivals of their fast meetings. It seems likely that the notes preserved by the family relate to days of extraordinary prayer rather than daily family prayer. However the documents provide a glimpse into the form, style, and content of family prayers in the Harley household.

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<sup>41</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70105, no.22, letter from Stanley Gower to Sir Robert Harley, undated

<sup>42</sup> The National Archives, SP16/381/92, quoted in Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads*, 57-8

<sup>43</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70089, Misc.93:14, undated; 70062, 22 February 1632 [12 April 1633], 24 January 1633, 'scriptures to be read to further our humiliation & to help our confession' 20 February 1632; 70001, f.345, 30 March 1627 and 29 February 1627.

<sup>44</sup> Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads*, 59

These notes function as preparation for prayer and were probably used as an *aide-memoire* or crib sheet as Sir Robert led prayers. Internally the documents show signs of being used as a prompt sheet. These are rough notes with the use of abbreviation, so are highly personal documents that anyone but Sir Robert would have had difficulty deciphering. Each set of notes appears to have had repeated use. There are a main set of notes dated in one ink, with insertions and deletions dated in a different ink. This suggests Sir Robert kept and adapted sets of notes for re-use, deleting prayers no longer relevant and adding new ones in response to events.

How should we interpret his use and reuse of lists of prayers? Were the Harley family prayers a formulaic repetition of regular themes? Perhaps this reveals the pressures of time upon the godly householder who sought to live up to his responsibilities for family religion while also taking an active role in local and national political and social networks. Time pressure may have led to Sir Robert's economical reuse of notes. A more thoughtful response would reconsider the stark opposition of set and extemporary prayer, and recognise a fluid blending of set and extemporary forms in contemporary practice. Sir Robert's notes were a framework for extemporary prayer and the vocalised prayers would have varied each time they were performed. Following a similar structure each time allowed his family and servants to easily follow the prayer. However the bare-bones structure mapped out in his notes allowed for considerable extemporising and emphasis to be introduced. This approach to family prayer suggests a careful balance between the duty to prepare adequately for communal prayer and the expectation that one should be able to pray extemporarily. Thomas Froyssell recalled that Sir Robert continued to lead family prayer in the days before his death yet was 'not able to Enlarge in Prayer, because of weakness'.<sup>45</sup> This supports the notion that Sir Robert usually

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<sup>45</sup> Thomas Froyssell, *Yadidyah or, The beloved disciple A sermon preached at the funerall of the Honourable Sir Robert Harley, Knight of the Honourable Order of the Bath; at Brampton-Brian in Hereford-shire. December 10. 1656*, (London: printed by M.S. for Thomas Parkhurst, 1658), 117

expanded at length on his core message. One set of notes composed in preparation for prayer were likely composed and used by his son Sir Edward Harley.<sup>46</sup> This suggests Sir Edward sought to emulate his father with prayers that were carefully prepared yet delivered with the spirit.

Sir Simonds D'Ewes' practice of family prayer reveals a similar blending of set and extemporary forms. D'Ewes claimed that by the age of fourteen he had attained 'two or three severall formes of extemporarie praier, which I was able not onlie to make use of in secret being alone, but even in a familie alsoe before others.'<sup>47</sup> It is hard to interpret this assertion which seems to circumscribe extemporary prayer to two or three forms. Could it be that D'Ewes was also making use of frameworks to guide extemporary prayer? Perhaps D'Ewes composed several prayers of his own which he then used as set forms in family prayer. In his commonplace book, D'Ewes wrote that 'the spirit of prayer' was a sign of adoption to God. Despite this, D'Ewes also condemned the 'wicked and the hypocrites [who] may formally praise God and pray unto him and perhaps in a hotter composure of words than a godlie man...sobbing out and blubbering over some fitts of repentance' clearly preferring a composed and reserved manner of prayer.<sup>48</sup> D'Ewes sought and valued the skills of extemporary prayer yet he didn't completely disparage set forms of prayer because 'Christ set it [prayer] foorth to us by his example and patterne' and 'Christ is the fountaine and originall of our spirituall life.'<sup>49</sup>

Other fragmentary archival material suggests that extemporary prayer existed happily alongside set forms of prayer in contemporary practice. Among both the Harley and D'Ewes manuscripts are lists of Bible verses and quotes that could have been used as material for

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<sup>46</sup> See below for discussion of the dating of this document, 236.

<sup>47</sup> British Library, London, Harley Manuscripts, 646, f.28v

<sup>48</sup> British Library, London, Harley Manuscripts, 227, f.5

<sup>49</sup> British Library, London, Harley Manuscripts, 227, f.4

prayer.<sup>50</sup> Preserved alongside the prayer notes in the Harley archive, one such list is headed 'scriptures to be read to further our humiliation & help our confession'.<sup>51</sup> Historians Alec Ryrie and Kate Narveson characterise surviving written prayers as a patchwork 'soaked in scriptural quotation' and speculate that extemporary prayers would be similar.<sup>52</sup> Scraps of prayer notes also survive in the Isham archive, scrawled on the reverse of a letter.<sup>53</sup> One begins: 'o eternall god & most gracious ffather, we confesse yt by manifold transgressions we deserved whatsoever thy law hath threatened against sinners; or contempt of thy divine service is great, and we hear thy word but obey it not...'. A prayer for use in the Gell household is written out in full.<sup>54</sup> Notes, lists, and extracts all suggest a reality that was far from the opposing images of slavish adherence to published forms of prayer or of rambling free prayer. Lewis Bayly's advice would have appealed to householders like D'Ewes and Harley. In his directions for evening prayer, Bayly provides a checklist of things to include for those with 'the gift of praier' and set prayers for others, leaving spaces for sins to be inserted.<sup>55</sup> This flexibility would have appealed to those able to perform extemporary prayer.

Bayly's model prayers show what he felt family prayers should consist of. His morning prayer for the family weaved together the themes of thanksgiving, justification by faith, repentance and election, and requests God's blessing for the day ahead. Bayly's evening prayer had a stronger emphasis on repentance, makes thanksgiving for preservation during the day and calls upon God's protection for the night ahead. Prominent in both prayers is concern for the universal church, the Kingdom, and Church and its royal family, ministers,

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<sup>50</sup> British Library, London, Harley Manuscripts, 339, ff.34-6

<sup>51</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70062, 20 Feb 1632

<sup>52</sup> Kate Narveson, "Publishing the Sole-talk of the Soule: Genre in Early Stuart Piety" in *Centered on the Word: Literature, Scripture, and the Tudor-Stuart Middle Way*, ed. Daniel Doerksen and Christopher Hodgkins (Dover: Delaware University Press, 2004), 113; Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 225

<sup>53</sup> Northamptonshire Record Office, Northampton, IC249

<sup>54</sup> Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, Gell of Hopton Hall, D258/7/13/6(ix)

<sup>55</sup> Bayly, *The Practise of Pietie*, 405-420

and magistrates.<sup>56</sup> Ryrie has drawn attention to the frequency of prayers for the public world in family prayers and emphasised the political nature of this material; its potential to express loyalty to or dissatisfaction with Church or Monarch.<sup>57</sup> For Ryrie this is an example of the inseparability of the personal and political and the role the family unit plays in the wider commonwealth. The practice and content of family prayer also contributed to the shaping and communicating of the family's religious and social identity. As Bayly insists, 'grace and prayer go together' and to communally pray together in repentance and thanksgiving would have reinforced the identity of a godly and elect household.<sup>58</sup>

The Harley family prayers can be explored using the notes preserved in the archives. These demonstrate the points raised above, however, two caveats should be acknowledged. Firstly, these surviving notes were probably prepared and utilised in extraordinary prayers rather than daily prayer. Secondly, the notes are a bullet point list to structure prayer. There is no knowing how much time Sir Robert devoted to each point on the list; some may have been dealt with quickly, others may have been elaborated. For instance, one note for 22 February 1633 reminded Sir Robert 'For our particualr deliverances'.<sup>59</sup> Sir Robert must have expanded significantly on this point to itemise some of those deliverances, likewise for 'Thanksgivings'. Notwithstanding these caveats, the overwhelming majority of the notes in each set relate to public matters.

A useful comparison is the content of Sir Robert's family prayers in the days before his death as reported in Thomas Froyssell's funeral sermon. Three days before his death he 'prayed for the Ruine of Antichrist' and 'for the Churches of God beyond Sea, naming Savoy, Switzerland, Germany' territories where Protestants were being persecuted in the mid 1650s.

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<sup>56</sup> Bayly, *The Practise of Pietie*, 438-449, 469-480

<sup>57</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 378-381

<sup>58</sup> Bayly, *The Practise of Pietie*, 337

<sup>59</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70062, 22 February 1633

The following day, 5<sup>th</sup> November, Sir Robert apparently blessed God for his mercy to the church and nation on the day of the 'powder plot'.<sup>60</sup> This may have been a subtle allusion to Sir Robert's position as a leading Parliamentarian who nonetheless opposed the Regicide. While it could easily be argued this is a strategic inclusion for political reasons, it is followed by a highly personalised list of the mercies Sir Robert blessed God for on his own account; including his wife Brilliana, his grandchildren, and the restoration of his hearing.<sup>61</sup> This detail lends credibility and reflects prescriptive guidance to pray for both public and personal good.

The prayer notes demonstrate a similar balance of the seemingly formulaic and deeply personal. The notes for 24 January 1633 include standard prayers 'For ye kings majesty the queene ... ye queen of bohemia &c' and 'For ye counsell nobility magistrates'.<sup>62</sup> Yet Sir Robert also made notes to remember to pray 'That God in mercy will be pleased to give a blessed issue to ye buisness with Sr Randall Cranfield...That God would santify ye means for deliverance out of debt. For ye direction of Mr Dun in regard of his removall & for marriage' and for 'ye business of ye forrest'.<sup>63</sup> The prayers demonstrate a sense of corporate penitence and trust in Salvation via the mercy of Christ. On 24 January, Sir Robert reminded himself to pray 'For this place yt God would in riche mercy restore ye gospell to us by one after his own heart & continuance of exercises' and the prayers habitually concluded with an affirmation of covenant: 'Lastly yt God willbe pleased in mercy to stablishe us in ye covenant as he hath receaved us to renew it with hym'.<sup>64</sup> Jacqueline Eales has characterised the prayer notes as 'strongly anti-Catholic and anti-Arminian in tone'.<sup>65</sup> In addition, the prayers demonstrate a concern for the progress of reformation and Protestant communities; overseas and closer to home. Sir Robert's notes for 17 December 1624, reused on 8 June 1625, include prayers for

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<sup>60</sup> Froysell, *Yadidyah or, The beloved disciple*, 117

<sup>61</sup> Froysell, *Yadidyah or, The beloved disciple* 117-118

<sup>62</sup> British Library, Additional Manuscripts, 70062, 24 January 1633

<sup>63</sup> British Library, Additional Manuscripts 70062, 22 February 1632

<sup>64</sup> British Library, Additional Manuscripts, 70062, 24 January 1633, 22 February 1632

<sup>65</sup> Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads*, 59



'The free passage of ye gospel etc' and 'The sanctifying of ye Sabbath'. Sir Robert prays for 'The ministers of this parish, wigmore, Leintwardine, aysford: Exercises Lempster, loundon and falon, cheshire', the 'distressed churches of Bohemia, France, ye palatine, low Countries' and for good measure 'the good estate of Gods church everywhere'.<sup>66</sup>

As well as reflecting the Harleys' religious attitudes and concerns, the prayer notes give an insight into their sense of family identity; and the process of reinforcing and displaying that identity. Through prayer for the progress of reformation internationally, the Harleys identify themselves with that cause. The Harleys are expressing common cause and associating themselves with co-religionists internationally through their prayers. Eales has outlined the godly networks the Harleys cultivated, many individuals of which were mentioned by name in the prayer notes.<sup>67</sup> By doing so the Harleys are claiming their place among the godly, affirming a shared devotional identity and sealing it with prayer. The strongest expression of identity and community is in the notes for 17 December 1624: 'That ye mercyes we begg for off god would vouchsafe to those yt joine with us this day in other places especially to those yt have formerly assisted us in the like'.<sup>68</sup> Here the Harleys assert the expectation of mutual prayer from their co-religionists, a powerful statement of their identity as a leading godly family.

## **The mechanics of family prayer**

### **Timing**

The prescriptive authors of all backgrounds agreed that family prayer should be performed at least daily. Early in the period this hardly needed spelling out and authors moved on to discuss specific times straight away. Later puritan authors seemed compelled to defend daily

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<sup>66</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70089, 17 December 1624

<sup>67</sup> Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads*, 59-69

<sup>68</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70089, 17 December 1624

prayer, illustrating their sensitivity in this period. William Thomas pointed to the Lord's Prayer command to ask for daily bread and apart from such sustenance 'everyday supplyeth new matter both of petition and thanksgiving...everyday hath its evils and vexations which are to be sweetned with prayer, and made tolerable, and its comforts also, and contentments, which are to be sanctified by prayer'.<sup>69</sup> Everyday life as a family provided occasion to worship God and there were family sins, mercies, and necessities daily committed, received, and required.<sup>70</sup> Thomas and Richard Baxter reminded their readers not to delay such an important duty when one does not know whether one shall be alive tomorrow.<sup>71</sup> Baxter insists 'it is easie for a man that is willing to see, that less than twice a day, doth not answer the command of praying without ceasing.'<sup>72</sup> Towards the close of the seventeenth century Samuel Slater reiterates the arguments in favour of daily family prayer. For Slater, daily family prayer was 'taught by the daily sacrifice under the law' and should not be performed on the Sabbath only, like in some families, but should be 'the work of everyday'.<sup>73</sup>

There was widespread agreement that morning and evening were the most appropriate times for family prayer.<sup>74</sup> Prayer schemes such as Lewis Bayly's typically provide prayers for use by the family every morning and evening. The precise time cannot, according to John Downname, be prescribed although he does wish it to be 'before they go about their worldly business.'<sup>75</sup> This echoes William Perkins who thought family prayer should be performed 'before they begin the workes of their calling.'<sup>76</sup> Many authors also indicated that mealtimes were appropriate times to perform family prayer. Food should be received with thanksgiving

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<sup>69</sup> Thomas, *A preservative of piety*, 177

<sup>70</sup> Baxter, *A Christian directory*, 507

<sup>71</sup> Baxter, *A Christian directory*, 507; Thomas, *A preservative of piety*, 177-8

<sup>72</sup> Baxter, *A Christian directory*, 507; Thomas, *A preservative of piety*, 178

<sup>73</sup> Slater, *An Earnest Call to Family Religion*, 23, 177

<sup>74</sup> Perkins, *Christian oeconomie*, 6; Baxter, *A Christian directory*, 507; Thomas, *A preservative of piety*, 179-80; Slater, *An Earnest Call to Family Religion*, 181-6

<sup>75</sup> Downname, *A guide to godlynesse*, 240

<sup>76</sup> Perkins, *Christian oeconomie*, 6

and sanctified by prayer and, as the family eat together, 'they must give thanks together'.<sup>77</sup> All agreed that the precise timing of family prayers should be when it is most fit and convenient for each individual family, and as 'the occasions and circumstances of families are various and different...the governours of families are to make use of their own prudence and discretion in the choice thereof.'<sup>78</sup> The best time was when the family had freedom from other business and interruptions, when they are least tired and distracted, and when their minds and hearts are in the best composure.<sup>79</sup> In this vein, Richard Bernard recommended that householders 'performe al things seasonably, not late in the night after toilsome labour, & when weariness & time itselfe doe inforce the body to sleepe.'<sup>80</sup>

Some prescriptive authors advocated set times for family prayer. Baxter believed 'set times will prove the fittest times: and to leave the time undetermined and uncertain, will put all out of order' and if 'every ordinary work may know its time...confusion may not shut out godliness.'<sup>81</sup> William Thomas appealed to the authority of Calvin, who said it was 'profitable to have some certain hours consecrated to prayer, lest prayer should be forgotten.' He asserted that 'set-hours do not bind, but mind conscience.' However, Thomas and Baxter recognised that this set time will vary by family and may have to change in response to events.<sup>82</sup> The prescriptions regarding frequency and timing commit readers to perform family prayer at least twice daily while giving householders a large measure of latitude to schedule how they see fit.

Unexceptional as twice daily family prayer might seem, Alec Ryrie argues this was in practice 'aspired to more than observed'.<sup>83</sup> The godly lives literature provides many examples

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<sup>77</sup> Baxter, *A Christian directory*, 504; Perkins, *Christian oeconomie*, 6

<sup>78</sup> Slater, *An Earnest Call to Family Religion*, 186-7

<sup>79</sup> Slater, *An Earnest Call to Family Religion*, 187-8; Baxter, *A Christian directory*, 566, 598

<sup>80</sup> Bernard, *Josuahs Godly Resolution*, 28

<sup>81</sup> Baxter, *A Christian directory*, 511, 594

<sup>82</sup> Thomas, *A preservative of piety*, 179; Baxter, *A Christian directory*, 507

<sup>83</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 365

of households performing family prayer in the morning and evening. William Hinde for instance expanded at length on John Bruen's twice daily family worship.<sup>84</sup> Yet Ryrie believes this marks them out as exceptional.<sup>85</sup> William Bagshaw remembered that John Gell did keep 'Houshold Religion' in the morning as well as the evening in his 'House of God'.<sup>86</sup> Thomas Froysell described the Harley household as a 'house of prayer' yet did not specifically mention twice daily observance.<sup>87</sup> Archival evidence of twice daily family prayers is rare. There are many instances of prayer mentioned in the letters exchanged between members of the Harley family, yet twice daily prayer was not mentioned explicitly. In one tantalising snippet Abigail Harley while discussing something else entirely refers to 'wensday morning after prayers & hearing ye scriptures'.<sup>88</sup> Does this mean that few households were living up to the ideal presented in the prescriptive literature? Arguing from a lack of evidence is problematic and it could be that among families where the practice was established it wasn't worthy of note. However it does seem likely that twice daily family prayer was aspirational rather than realistic. Lady Margaret Hoby regularly mentions communal evening worship of which the main content was the 'lector' or formal communal reading alongside 'publeck' or family prayer.<sup>89</sup> In the morning, however, Hoby performed prayer alone, or occasionally with her chaplain Richard Rhodes, but the family did not usually come together until later in the day.

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<sup>84</sup> William Hinde, *A faithfull remonstrance of the holy life and happy death of Iohn Bruen of Bruen-Stapleford, in the county of Chester, Esquire*, (London: Printed by R. B. for Philemon Stephens, and Christopher Meredith, 1641), 68-74

<sup>85</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 365

<sup>86</sup> William Bagshaw, *De Spiritualibus Peccis: Notes, (or Notices) Concerning the Work of God, and some of those who have been workers together with God, in the Hundred of the High Peak in Derbyshire*, (London: Printed for Nevill Simmons, 1702), 57

<sup>87</sup> Froysell, *Yadidyah or, The beloved disciple*, 102

<sup>88</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts 70115, Abigail Harley to Sir Edward Harley, undated, letter 54

<sup>89</sup> *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 81

## Participants

The timing of family prayer would have been influenced by the people involved. 'Prayer is required of the whole family together, all concurring to call upon the name of God' insisted Philip Goodwin.<sup>90</sup> But who constitutes the whole family? 'A Christian-Housholder, kneeling before the lord, with his wife, and children, and whole family' wrote William Thomas.<sup>91</sup> Research has established that early modern understandings of family encompassed all those resident in the household, including the servants.<sup>92</sup> Such a potentially large and diverse group would have made the timing of devotions problematic; having to fit around the duties of servants and the demands of young children.

Relationships between and the duties of masters and servants were covered in depth by manuals of household government. The most well-known and influential was William Gouge's *Of Domesticall Duties* (1622). It was the master's duty to provide for the religious observance and education of his servants. Gouge wrote 'masters must seeke the spirituall edification of their servants' by requiring their attendance at public services, instruction in the principles of religion and 'they must to instruction adde prayer'.<sup>93</sup> Servants, meanwhile, were duty bound to obey the instructions of religious masters.<sup>94</sup> Post-Restoration Baxter told servants 'you are not worthy to partake of the mercies of the family, if you will not joyn in prayers for those mercies'.<sup>95</sup> It was not only puritan authors who made such assertions.<sup>96</sup> In his 1633 manual of orderly life in a Christian household, the conformist Matthew Griffith

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<sup>90</sup> *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 60, 77

<sup>91</sup> Thomas, *A preservative of piety*, 162

<sup>92</sup> Naomi Tadmor, *Family and Friends in eighteenth-century England: household, kinship and patronage*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), passim; Susan Broomhall makes a compelling case for 'Why the household?' Susan Broomhall, *Emotions in the Household, 1200-1900*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008), 1-5.

<sup>93</sup> Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties*, 666-7; Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie*; and Robert Cleaver, *Godly Forme of Household Government*, (London: 1598) set the tone early.

<sup>94</sup> Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties*, 609

<sup>95</sup> Baxter, *A Christian directory*, 555; 490, 492

<sup>96</sup> R.C. Richardson, *Household Servants in Early Modern England*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 125

who was later a royalist and royal chaplain in Oxford<sup>97</sup> instructed the master to ensure his household served God everyday and 'pray for, and with his familie' morning and evening.<sup>98</sup>

To this end, masters chose godly servants and servants sought positions in godly households.<sup>99</sup> Robert Cleaver, in a *Godly forme of Household Government*, wished that 'all christians, masters, and householders, when they goe about to hire anie servants, would be no lesse carefull and inquisitive of their honestie, godlie conversation, and how they have profited in the knowledge of God his religion, then they bee to inquire and knowe what they can doe'.<sup>100</sup> Gouge believed that, not only will religious servants be obedient and diligent, but they will faithfully call the blessings of God upon the household and the work they do in it, for when 'such as feare god' are chosen 'there is hope of receiuing the more good from them'.<sup>101</sup> Finding servants of the appropriate religious background could be difficult, unless you were John Bruen. According to his biographer, William Hinde, the religious flocked to his service.<sup>102</sup>

The most famous portrayal of pious masters and servants must be that of the Bruen household, idealised by Hinde in his hagiographical account of John Bruen's life. Bruen was lauded for the care and attention paid to the religious edification and encouragement of his servants. His servants were praised for their own godly exercises of mutual exhortation and prayer, which they performed after family prayer.<sup>103</sup> Robert Passfield, or 'old Robert' was particularly commended for his piety and religious knowledge. The relationship between Bruen and Passfield was characterised by mutual comfort and edification, respect, and

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<sup>97</sup> Tai Liu, "Griffith, Matthew (b. in or before 1599, d. 1665)", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, Jan 2008, accessed 16 Feb 2014, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11601>

<sup>98</sup> Matthew Griffith, *Bethel: or, A forme for families*, (London: Printed by Richard Badger for Robert Allot, 1633), 394-5

<sup>99</sup> Baxter, *A Christian directory*, 555; 490, 492

<sup>100</sup> Robert Cleaver, *Godly Forme of Household Government*, 371

<sup>101</sup> Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties*, 666, 647

<sup>102</sup> Hinde, *A faithfull remonstrance*, 55-6

<sup>103</sup> Hinde, *A faithfull remonstrance*, 65

care.<sup>104</sup> This text was, however, highly prescriptive and politicised; as historian R.C. Richardson makes clear in his critical engagement with it. Bruen died in 1625 and Hinde in 1629, yet the text was not published until 1641 and was prefaced by Hinde's son Samuel. The timing of its publication reveals its polemical purpose. It was 'an ideological tract for the troubled times, a pointedly didactic biography, with unambiguous lessons about the necessity of social harmony and interdependence.'<sup>105</sup> Alternative archival sources provide fragmentary glimpses of servants and their role in family religion. Nehemiah Wallington for instance purchased a copy of Gouge's *Of Domesticall Duties* and, from it, drew up a list of thirty-one articles to order his household and further them in reformation. All the adults of the household, including servants, signed it in agreement.<sup>106</sup>

The Harley family expended much effort to find godly servants and took care to ensure their household servants would be receptive to their devotional routine. They took to heart the views of Sir Robert Harley's friend and correspondent William Gouge. Thomas Froyssell asserted that Sir Robert would not brook sin and prophaness 'in any under his Roof' and 'cared not for the service of one that feared not god.'<sup>107</sup> In May 1633, Brilliana was recruiting a lady's maid and one of the principal qualities of the preferred candidate was that 'she, they say, is religious and discreet'. During the 1630s when some of the Harley's domestic religious practices could have been negatively interpreted by hostile Laudian authorities, discretion in servants would have been highly valued. Recruiting co-religionists ensured such discretion. Sir Robert utilised puritan networks to procure servants from a godly religious background. Julines Herring, puritan lecturer at Shrewsbury, sent a candidate to Sir Robert having heard he was looking for a groom of 'our religion'. Herring vouched for his 'christain

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<sup>104</sup> Hinde, *A faithfull remonstrance*, 56-61

<sup>105</sup> Richardson, *Household Servants*, 137

<sup>106</sup> Seaver, *Wallington's World*, 79

<sup>107</sup> Froyssell, *Yadidyah or, The beloved disciple*, 102-3

walking as in his generall course so in his particular calling' and was sure that if Sir Robert engaged him he would find him 'a profitable servant'.<sup>108</sup>

Sir Edward Harley emulated his parents by taking equal care to choose servants that would be sympathetic to the family's Presbyterian position and actively participate in their domestic religion. It was prudent to recruit servants they trusted to have intimate knowledge of the family's religious activities, as post-restoration policy oscillated between persecution, toleration, and promotion of moderate Puritans. In 1688 Sir Edward's son Edward wrote 'if the gardener is gone from Brampton, there is a poor Frenchman that is very much recommended to me'.<sup>109</sup> Letters from that year show Edward was heavily involved in charitable work among French Protestant refugees in London following the revocation of the edict of Nantes in 1685. This circumstantial evidence suggests the gardener was recommended as much for his religious background as for his skills. In July 1698, Sir Edward's daughter Abigail, who ran the household while Sir Edward, his sons, and their wives were in London, was looking to replace a servant and was considering the departing servant's sister 'who is commended for a very pious young woman.'<sup>110</sup> The family took their duty to instruct servants in religion seriously. When Abigail recruited a girl to look after the poultry in March 1692, she wrote to her father that she intended to first send the girl to school for a year to learn to read.<sup>111</sup> The Harleys endeavoured to conform to the prescriptions of godly divines on the duty of masters and mistresses to ensure their households were religiously ordered through the employment of suitably godly people, and the conscionable performance of their responsibilities towards those people.

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<sup>108</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70109, Misc.71.3 Julines Hering to Thomas Pierson, undated

<sup>109</sup> Historical Manuscripts Commission, *The manuscripts of His Grace the Duke of Portland, [formerly] preserved at Welbeck Abbey, 14th Report, appendix. ii;* (1894), 408, Edward Harley to his father Sir Edward Harley

<sup>110</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70117, 123, Abigail Harley to her father Sir Edward Harley, 8 July 1698

<sup>111</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70116, Abigail Harley to her father Sir Edward Harley, 19 March 1692



The governor of the household was responsible for the souls of those under him and therefore family prayer should 'be performed ordinarily by the master and governour'.<sup>112</sup> He should 'be the mouth of the family in their daily conjunct prayers unto God', even if others present are more able, as long as he be competent.<sup>113</sup> It is therefore unsurprising that most of the prescriptive texts address themselves directly to the male householder. Many sought to live up to that ideal. Sir Robert Harley led family prayer when he was present in the household, even in the days leading up to his own death.<sup>114</sup> For some puritan authors asserting the authority of the male householder in this way can be seen, by contemporary analogy, to be defending the fabric of the social order in the state and church. As such, they distanced themselves from the seeming social anarchy of separatist movements, where self-proclaimed prophets came from any social status and included women. The sense that leadership of family prayer bolstered the moral authority and credit of the male householder is supported by Richard Baxter's condemnation of those who are unfit to do so; 'if this be cast on the wife it will be his dishonour.'<sup>115</sup> Baxter was sensitive to the times.

Earlier authors recognised that there might be legitimate reasons for the absence of the male householder. An obvious substitute was a domestic chaplain or local minister. However early seventeenth century authors were just as likely to recommend the wife for this role. Richard Bernard maintained that the wife had a duty to deputise or 'supply his place' whenever the husband was away from home.<sup>116</sup> Gouge legitimised the wife to pray, read, and perform exercises when her husband was 'negligent and careless' too.<sup>117</sup> Before the 1640s, writers were not as anxious about the spectre of female ministerial activity as later authors such as Baxter. Evidence suggests that women did play a significant role leading family prayer, and

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<sup>112</sup> Downname, *A guide to godlynesse*, 239

<sup>113</sup> Baxter, *A Christian directory* 530, 598

<sup>114</sup> Froyssell, *Yadidyah or, The beloved disciple*, 117-118

<sup>115</sup> Baxter, *A Christian directory*, 530

<sup>116</sup> Bernard, *Josuahs Godly Resolution*, 32

<sup>117</sup> Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties*, 260

not always just in the absence of male alternatives. Katherine Clarke, wife of the hagiographer Samuel Clarke, led the family in prayer when her husband was absent, and also 'she would do in his presence, in case of his sickness, and inability to perform the Duty himself.'<sup>118</sup> Elizabeth Isham was asked by her father to read morning prayers following her mother's death in 1625 which suggests Judith Isham had previously performed this role.<sup>119</sup> Jane Ratcliffe and Lady Margaret Hoby instructed their children and servants, and as Rylie notes, this could easily 'blur into leading prayers'.<sup>120</sup> Yet not all wives would willingly perform the duty. Baxter revealed in his *Life* of his wife Margaret that she refused to lead the family in prayer in his absence. Baxter attributed this to a faulty fear of hypocrisy but also implied that it was intended to force him to spend more time at home.<sup>121</sup>

The Harley archives provide numerous examples of the male householders' care to ensure the maintenance of good order and family prayer during their absences. The letters of the Brampton Bryan ministers, Thomas Pierson and Stanley Gower, kept Sir Robert informed of the devotional activities of his household whilst away. A letter from Pierson to Sir Robert on 14 January 1629 reassured him 'the lord enabling us we shall joyne with you on Wednesday next keeping that day'.<sup>122</sup> Lady Brilliana Harley played an important role in estate affairs and the education of their children. While their shared religious beliefs suffuse Sir Robert and Lady Brilliana's correspondence, she seems to have left communication about Brampton's communal religious activities to the ministers. In contrast, Lady Brilliana's correspondence

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<sup>118</sup> Samuel Clarke, *A Looking-Glass for Good Women to Dress themselves by: Held forth in the Life & Death of Mrs Katherine Clarke, who Dyed Anno Christi, 1675. Late Wife of Mr. Samuel Clarke, Minister*, (London: Printed for William Miller, 1677), 19

<sup>119</sup> Northampton Record Office MS, IL 3365 (also available at <http://web.warwick.ac.uk/english/perdita/Isham/>, accessed 5 March 2017, Elizabeth Isham, *Diary*, 1625); Rylie, *Being Protestant*, 371

<sup>120</sup> Rylie, *Being Protestant*, 371

<sup>121</sup> Richard Baxter, *A breviat of the life of Margaret, the daughter of Francis Charlton ... and wife of Richard Baxter ... : there is also published the character of her mother, truly described in her published funeral sermon, reprinted at her daughters request, called, The last work of a believer, his passing-prayer recommending his departing spirit to Christ, to be received by him*, (London: Printed for B. Simmons, 1681), 79

<sup>122</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70001, f.354, Thomas Pierson to Sri Robert Harley, 14 January 1629

with her son Edward is full of references to their devotional activities. It seems likely that Lady Brilliana shared responsibility for domestic religion in her husband's absence with the ministers and deferred to their position in communications with her husband. She was certainly concerned by the loss of Gower in June 1643 asking Sir Robert 'If Mr Gower goe up to Loundon I hope you will send me some directions how it is beest his place should be supplied'.<sup>123</sup>

Later seventeenth century Harleys were less able to rely on their local ministers to perform devotional roles within the household. While Sir Edward's wife was alive, this duty rested with her and Sir Edward regularly directed her to 'keep ye family to ye worship of God' and 'not let not ye family worship be neglected'.<sup>124</sup> The non-conformist Nathaniel Oldfield resided with the Harleys in the mid 1680s and in May 1685, Sir Edward directed his wife that Oldfield should 'take care of ye worship of God in our family & that you wil before you goe charge them to be observant therein'.<sup>125</sup> In the absence of both parents and with no divine in residence, he instructed his daughter Brilliana in June 1670 'you must be careful to keep the family in good order, and that all come to prayers constantly'.<sup>126</sup> In the 1690s, Sir Edward's letters from his daughter Abigail frequently included some variation on this; from June 18 1695: 'I endeavour not to fail in a dutiful observance of yr commands in all respects, thro divine goodness your family has been kept from disorders in your absence I hope will still be preserved from all secret wickedness as well as publicke.'<sup>127</sup> Abigail led the devotional life of

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<sup>123</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70010, f.88v, Lady Brilliana Harley to Sir Robert Harley, 7 June 1643

<sup>124</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70128, Sir Edward Harley to his wife Lady Abigail Harley, 15 November 1662, 19 November 1667, 3 December 1667, 30 June 1685, 6 September 1688

<sup>125</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70128, Sir Edward Harley to his wife Lady Abigail Harley, 12 May 1685

<sup>126</sup> Historical Manuscripts Commission *The manuscripts of His Grace the Duke of Portland, [formerly] preserved at Welbeck Abbey, 14th Report, appendix. ii;* (1894), 316, Sir Edward Harley to his daughter Brilliana Harley

<sup>127</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70117, Abigail Harley to her father Sir Edward Harley, 18 June 1695

the Harley household as she was largely responsible for the raising of her nieces and nephews at Brampton Bryan.

### Location

In *The Practise of Pietie*, Bayly recommended that the Christian householder ‘call every morning all thy familie to some convenient roome’ indicating that the room should be sufficiently large and comfortable for the assembled household.<sup>128</sup> Nominating a specific space for family prayer is rare in the prescriptive literature. The clerical authors were conscious of their diverse readership. The seventeenth century was also a time of changing fashions in the construction and layout of homes. By using vague terms such as ‘convenient’ they prescribed the use of whatever space a family is able to commandeer for communal devotion. Given the size of the family group, it is likely that the rooms used for family prayer were the larger, semi-public communal spaces within the home.

The prescriptive literature did not discuss the use of domestic chapels for family prayer, probably because households grand enough to accommodate a domestic chapel were rare. Annabelle Ricketts' research into domestic chapels revealed the rise and fall of their fortunes throughout the late sixteenth and seventeenth century. Calvinist theology and practice no longer required separate and secluded space for devotions and therefore ordinary domestic space could be used.<sup>129</sup> Differentiated chapels declined in popularity in the Elizabethan period, yet the seventeenth century saw a resurgence of chapel building and consecration. Ricketts suggests that chapels built prior to 1640 reflected the religious beliefs of their patrons in the placement of pulpit, communion table, etc; but post-Restoration Episcopal regulations sought to control their consecration to discourage them from becoming alternatives to public worship.

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<sup>128</sup> Bayly, *The Practise of Pietie*, 437

<sup>129</sup> Tara Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household*, 105; Ricketts, Gapper and Knight, “Designing for Protestant Worship”, 121-3; Ricketts, *The English Country House Chapel*, 58

For the vast majority, ordinary domestic space was the normal location for family worship. William Hinde notes that John Bruen had a chapel within his house and it's possible that family prayers took place there.<sup>130</sup> However, in another place in the text, Hinde mentions the parlour in connection with family prayer. During his final illness Bruen asked Hinde to gather the family in prayer in the great parlour 'commanding them to set open his little parlour door, adjoyning to it, that he might heare us and joyne with us.'<sup>131</sup> The parlour was a ground floor room off the hall where, by the seventeenth century, the family were increasingly separate from the servants' activities.<sup>132</sup> Accounts of practice typically mention the parlour. The Harleys used the parlour for their family prayer; as recorded in a letter from Lady Brilliana to Sir Robert in May 1626. Following an illness, Brilliana wrote 'this day I have bine so fare as the parler to give thankes with my family for his mercy to me'.<sup>133</sup>

Tara Hamling suggests that the decorative choices of some householders show that family prayer and worship was the defining activity for their most commodious domestic spaces, such as the hall and parlour.<sup>134</sup> Traditional scholarship emphasised Protestant disapproval of the use of images in worship and certainly godly Protestants advocated the plainest of interior decoration for public places of worship. However, recent research has emphasised the continued presence of religious imagery in a domestic setting post-reformation.<sup>135</sup> The majority of contemporaries agreed with William Perkins that 'we hold the historicall use of images to be good and lawfull...we think the histories of the Bible may be painted in private

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<sup>130</sup> Hinde, *A faithfull remonstrance*, 87. In 1590, according to Hinde, Bruen built a pulpit in the chapel where the preacher he maintained preached for a short time.

<sup>131</sup> Hinde, *A faithfull remonstrance*, 226

<sup>132</sup> Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry*, 289

<sup>133</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70110, f.33, Lady Brilliana Harley to Sir Robert Harley, 12 May 1626

<sup>134</sup> Tara Hamling, "Living with the Bible in Post-Reformation England: the Materiality of Text, Image and Object in Domestic Life", *Studies in Church History*, 50, (2014), 210-239

<sup>135</sup> Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Tara Hamling, "To See or Not to See? The Presence of Religious Imagery in the Protestant Household", *Art History*, 30, no 2, (2007): 170-197

places'.<sup>136</sup> Hamling provides many examples of pious inscriptions and Old and New Testament religious imagery in seventeenth century domestic interiors, particularly in the important and larger rooms where family prayer would have been performed. During family worship the imagery would have served to instruct, edify, and reinforce the messages conveyed in prayer and other practices. Hamling argues that the presence of the religious imagery and inscriptions would also have influenced the ordinary activities of the day. They would provide constant edification and therefore function as 'a form of social control', regulating the behaviour and thoughts of members of the household as they went about their daily tasks.<sup>137</sup> This imagery could help family worship transcend its temporal fixed point and 'actively spiritualize the atmosphere of the household'.<sup>138</sup> It is a useful reminder that the effects of family prayer were designed to extend far beyond the fifteen minutes in which the prayer was performed.

Communal prayer was not always confined within the main reception spaces. In John Bruen's household, the servants would conduct additional communal prayers 'which they ordinarily performed in the kitchen, more privately, after prayer in the Parlour with the whole family'.<sup>139</sup> Bruen family worship also extended beyond the walls of the household. On the way to and from church, Bruen endeavoured 'as they went along to increase their knowledge, Faith and Obedience, by repeating, and conferring of the Evening Sermon, and to inlarge their hearts in Gods praises, by singing of psalmes'.<sup>140</sup> The next chapter will discuss how the outdoors became an important space for individual devotion; but the practice of the Bruen household shows how family prayer could also transcend space.

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<sup>136</sup> Quoted in: Hamling, "To See or Not to See?", 178

<sup>137</sup> Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household*, 106-9

<sup>138</sup> Hamling, "Living with the Bible", 15

<sup>139</sup> Hinde, *A faithfull remonstrance*, 64-5

<sup>140</sup> Hinde, *A faithfull remonstrance*, 212

## Gesture and posture

Body position and gesture in public worship was of utmost significance in the seventeenth century. The most common charges for non-conformity brought against lay people were refusal to kneel for communion and not removing headwear. The common charge of non-conformity against a minister involved his refusal to administer communion to those kneeling or refusing to make the sign of the cross in baptism. This context makes the uncontroversial nature of gesture in family prayer initially surprising; however, as Ryrice points out, 'kneeling was controversial *only* in that very specific context', that is, to receive communion. The generally accepted bodily attitude for family prayer is kneeling. Bayly prescribed 'then kneeling downe with them in reverent sort...pray with them'.<sup>141</sup> It was so uncontroversial that to be on one's knees was a metonym for prayer, as in this extract from William Thomas: 'It is more for Gods glory, that a whole family should be on their knees together.'<sup>142</sup> Spatial context was key when it came to devotional gestures; the space in which the gesture was performed gave it its meaning.

In his treatise of general prayer, George Downname considered several types of gesture in prayer and concluded by recommending kneeling and lifting up of the hands and eyes. These outward gestures are those best able to express the inward graces of reverence, humility, faith, and hope.<sup>143</sup> Ryrice calls this the 'classic Protestant posture of prayer'.<sup>144</sup> Kneeling is extremely common in contemporary visual images of prayer. Nigel Llewellyn's study of funeral monuments identified the kneeling form as increasingly popular from the late sixteenth century.<sup>145</sup> However, Llewellyn assumes that kneeling figures would be controversial in the context of contemporary debate over kneeling to receive communion. He

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<sup>141</sup> Bayly, *The Practise of Pietie*, 437

<sup>142</sup> Thomas, *Preservative of Piety*, 161

<sup>143</sup> Downname, *A Godly and Learned Treatise of Prayer*, 117-23

<sup>144</sup> Ryrice, *Being Protestant*, 178-9

<sup>145</sup> Nigel Llewellyn, *Funeral Monuments in Post-Reformation England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 103-5

describes the Purefoy Tomb at Fenny Drayton in Leicestershire (figure 3), as an 'imposition of orthodox Anglican authority', built shortly after the largely puritan congregation refused to kneel for communion in 1607.<sup>146</sup> The monument dates to 1628 and it is doubtful whether the force of the political and religious statement would hold over 20 years later. The Purefoys were staunchly godly and may have participated in that act of rebellion.<sup>147</sup>



**Figure 3: Purefoy Tomb, Fenny Drayton. Source: simplysup  
[https://www.geocaching.com/geocache/GC4NH4W\\_church-micro-4273-fenny-drayton?guid=4be9c824-8964-42ea-b71a-76e50a864d3d](https://www.geocaching.com/geocache/GC4NH4W_church-micro-4273-fenny-drayton?guid=4be9c824-8964-42ea-b71a-76e50a864d3d)**

According to Alec Ryrie, contemporary visual images of family prayer derive exclusively from funeral monuments and other memorial objects.<sup>148</sup> The function of these monuments was didactic and exemplary. Llewellyn felt that their prominent place in the parish church suggested funerary monuments acted as 'didactic iconography...to encourage the living to a

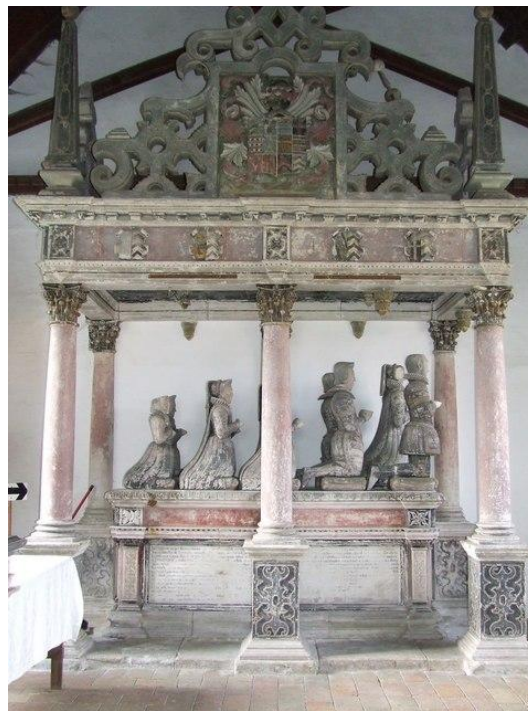
<sup>146</sup> Llewellyn, *Funeral Monuments*, 103-4

<sup>147</sup> Alexander Gordon, 'Stephens, Nathaniel (1606/7–1678)', rev. Michael Mullett, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, accessed 12 March 2017, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26390>

<sup>148</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 367



better life'.<sup>149</sup> For historian Peter Sherlock, the primary purpose of the monument was to instruct the living in how they should respond to the dead.<sup>150</sup> Sherlock argued that depictions of prayer on memorial monuments no longer reminded the living to pray for the dead, rather 'the dead had become patterns of piety'.<sup>151</sup> These are not realistic depictions of the practice, rather they are projections of personal and family identity, social status and continuity. Llewellyn theorised that funeral monuments had a ritualized function to resist the fragmentation of culture and maintain social differentiation.<sup>152</sup> When depicting the family at prayer, the patron of the design, usually a close relative, asserted both the social and religious identity of the deceased. The male householder is portrayed performing both his social status and his piety.



**Figure 4: The monument of Sir Edward and Lady Lewkenor with children, 1605, St. Mary's Church, Denham, Suffolk. Source: Keith Evans, CC-BY-SA**

<sup>149</sup> Nigel Llewellyn, *Funeral Monuments*

<sup>150</sup> Peter Sherlock, *Monuments and Memory in Early Modern England*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 95

<sup>151</sup> Peter Sherlock, *Monuments and Memory*, 113

<sup>152</sup> Nigel Llewellyn, *The Art of Death*, (London: Reaktion Books, 1991), 102-5

The monuments depicting family prayer demonstrate this ideal in a powerful exemplary symbol. One such example is the tomb erected in Denham, Suffolk, following the deaths of Sir Edward Lewkenor and his wife Susan in 1605.<sup>153</sup> (Figure 4) The tomb was commissioned by their son, also Sir Edward, who was praised in Timothy Oldmayne's funeral sermon following his own death in 1618:

no day euer passing him (to my knowledge) since he came to be a setled house-keeper, wherein his manner was not... to have his familie gathered together, and there himselfe (if no Minister were present, after a chapter once read out of the old and new Testament, and a Psalme sung) vpon his knees not only to blesse that God that had giuen life and being both to him and his, but also humbly to craue of him whatsoeuer things he thought most necessary, in regard of soule and body.<sup>154</sup>

In this depiction of the family at prayer, Lewkenor emphasised his parents' piety and the continuity of that piety in his own household. The monument sends a strong signal about the importance of devotion to the Lewkenor family identity.

More typical are monuments with the family arranged facing each other at prayer, sometimes with a prayer desk and Bible. In 1637, Sir John Northcote (1599-1676) erected a monument to his father and ancestors at Newton St Cyres, Devon, including a scene of domestic prayer in his own family (Figure 5). Northcote had been a member of the Long Parliament and raised parliamentary forces in the West Country; his biographer noted that his 1675 will showed 'puritanical leanings'.<sup>155</sup> The painted colours of this monument give the scene a

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<sup>153</sup> John William Bridgen, "Lewkenor, Sir Edward (1542–1605)", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, accessed 17 May 2014, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/74412>

<sup>154</sup> Timothy Oldmayne, *Gods rebuke in taking from vs that worthy and honourable gentleman Sir Edward Lewkenor Knight, the first day of May this present yeere 1618, he being at that time high Sheriffe of Suffolke whose Christian life and comfortable end are here faithfully recorded. Together with diuers profitable and necessarie instructions; deliuered first in a discourse at his funerall, and now enlarged, and published, for the benefit of others not then present*, (London: Printed by Edw. Griffin for Iohn Parker, 1619), 10–11

<sup>155</sup> Mary Wolffe, "Northcote, Sir John, baronet (1598/9–1676)", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, Jan 2008, accessed 18 May 2014, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20327>. Sir John himself went on to be buried there in 1675.

realism. This scene's position in the composition of the full tomb, below the standing figure of his father and busts of his grandfather and great-grandfather, sends a strong message about continuity and the importance of piety and family worship to the family's identity.



**Figure 5: Monument to Sir John Northcote and family, Newton St Cyres, Devon. Source: Lobsterthermidor. Released into the Public Domain.**

**<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:NorthcoteMonumentFullViewNewtonStCyres.JPG>**

Similar scenes can be seen on the monuments of families whose religious preferences are uncertain. Sir Roger Aston was a favourite of James I who married one of the King's cousins and represented Cheshire in the House of Commons, largely acting as an agent of the King<sup>156</sup> Beyond this we do not know anything of his religious preferences. His monument (Figure 6),

<sup>156</sup> "ASTON, Sir Roger (-d.1612), of Edinburgh and Cranfold, Mdx", The History of Parliament, accessed 18 May 2014 <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/aston-sir-roger-1612>

erected in St Dunstan in Cranfield in 1612-13, is similar to the Northcote Tomb in composition, as is the monument to Sir Cope D'Oyley (d.1633), his wife Martha and their ten children in Hambledon, Buckinghamshire (Figure 7). Again, their devotional preferences are unknown but their eldest son John attempted to hold the family seat, Greenlands, for the King.<sup>157</sup> What these examples suggest is that, regardless of religious outlook, there was an idealised image of the family at prayer which was promoted in the fabric of local churches through family monuments. It also reminds us that absence of archival evidence does not mean that a variety of families did not engage or aspire to engage in family prayer.



**Figure 6: Sir Roger Aston's Tomb in St Dunstan's Church in Cranford Park. Source: Maxwell Hamilton, CC-BY**

<sup>157</sup> "Greenlands: Past and Present", The Henley Centre for Customer Management, accessed 18 May 2014, <http://www.hccmsite.co.uk/webdocs/History%20of%20Greenlands.pdf>



**Figure 7: Monument to Sir Cope D'Oyley, St Mary the Virgin, Hambleden. Source: Harry Hawkins.**

### **Family devotional practices**

Communal prayer was the most important and prominent part of family worship. Philip Goodwin described ‘the life of religion’ as ‘bound up in the life of prayer’ and ‘therefore gods whole service is prayer, and prayer is the whole service of god.’ Yet family prayer was also part of a complex framework of domestic religious practises performed in company, including psalm singing, communal religious reading, and sermon repetition and catechising. Goodwin refers in his treatise to ‘the web of gods worship’, of which prayer is a pivotal part; but the hypocritical or sinful man who prays yet does not enhance it with other exercises makes ‘fine threds but no firm threed.’<sup>158</sup> He also wrote, ‘the prayer of one sincere Christian is as golden thred single; but the prayer of a whole familie is like divers threds of gold wreathed, and together twisted.’ The metaphor is extended to suggest that ‘prayer and religious exercises’ are like a ‘purple and fine linnen’ furnishing the godly household making it ‘glorious in the eye of god.’<sup>159</sup> Prayer by the whole family clothed the household in glory and the individual practices of family worship were stronger and more effective when woven together. Richard Baxter was more straightforward. His directions for family prayer

<sup>158</sup> Goodwin, *Religio domestica rediviva*, 171

<sup>159</sup> Goodwin, *Religio domestica rediviva*, 103-4

instructed 'let other duties concur as oft as may be to assist in prayer: as Reading and singing psalms.'<sup>160</sup>

Family prayer should be accompanied by other practices of family worship. An activity commonly linked to family prayer in the prescriptive literature was communal Bible reading. Lewis Bayly recommended that the godly householder either read or 'cause it to be read distinctly by some other' a chapter of the Bible before morning family prayer.<sup>161</sup> Likewise in the evening another chapter should be read after calling the family together.<sup>162</sup> Bible reading will be considered separately in the below chapter on reading and writing but here it suffices to recognise its close relationship with family prayer. A second communal devotional practice Bayly recommended to accompany family prayer in the evening was 'the singing of psalms'.<sup>163</sup>

### **Psalm singing**

The earliest continental reformers encouraged liturgical singing of metrical psalms, which played an important role in the early spread of Reformation ideas. As scholar Beth Quitslund explained, references to singing psalms meant, by default, *The Whole Booke of Psalms*, often known as the 'Sternhold and Hopkins' psalter.<sup>164</sup> This work began life as a small collection of psalms published by courtier Thomas Sternhold before his death in 1549 which were developed by, among others, the clergyman John Hopkins. Marian exiles, who enthusiastically practiced liturgical psalm singing in Frankfurt and Geneva, augmented the collections and brought the practice back to England. Elizabeth I's 1559 Injunctions gave official backing to liturgical singing and music, and congregational metrical psalms took off. In 1562, the Sternhold and Hopkins collection was published by John Day as *The Whole*

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<sup>160</sup> Goodwin, *Religio domestica rediviva*, 598

<sup>161</sup> Bayly, *Practise of Pietie*, 437

<sup>162</sup> Bayly, *Practise of Pietie*, 464

<sup>163</sup> Bayly, *Practise of Pietie*, 464

<sup>164</sup> Beth Quitslund, "Singing Psalms for Fun and Profit" in *Private and Domestic Devotion in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Jessica Martin and Alec Ryrie, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 243



*Book of Psalms* and remained the most influential Psalter until the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>165</sup> The Psalter was not only designed for liturgical use, it was also intended for use in domestic devotion. The long title of *The Whole Book of Psalms* itself made this clear: 'moreover in priuate houses for their godly solace and comfort'.<sup>166</sup>

Early in the Reformation, psalm singing was seen as desirable for educational purposes. Psalm paraphrases summarised God's word in simple vernacular form and were considered to 'speak most intimately for and to individual believers'.<sup>167</sup> In addition, psalm singing could be a godly substitute for less desirable and licentious songs. On returning from the Continent, the Marian exiles reshaped understandings of psalm singing; contrasting it not with immoral ballads, but with the Catholic Latin polyphonic mass, eventually undermining the notion of singing psalms for fun. With its place in parish congregational worship established, psalm singing also became part of domestic religion by the early seventeenth century. Psalm singing was recommended by prescriptive writers as part of the devotional life of the household.<sup>168</sup> Bayly's rules to be observed in psalm singing chimed with these developments. He insisted that psalms should not be sung at times of ordinary recreation or intermingled with prophane ballads. They should be sung with spirit, but also understanding, and they should be sung with 'comely reverence'. It was important that psalm singing should delight the heart more

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<sup>165</sup> For the history of liturgical psalm singing in the sixteenth century continental and English Reformation and the development of the 'Sternhold and Hopkins' see: Beth Quitslund, *The Reformation in Rhyme: Sternhold, Hopkins and the English Metrical Psalter, 1547-1603*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008); Hannibal Hamlin, *Psalm Culture and Early Modern English Literature*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 22-29

<sup>166</sup> *The whole booke of Psalmes collected into English meter by Thom. Stern., Iohn Hopkins, and others, conferred with the Ebrue with apt notes to sing them withall ; set forth and allowed to be song in all churches, of all the people together before and after morning and euening prayer, as also before & after sermons, and moreouer in priuate houses for their godly solace and comfort, laying apart all vngodly songes and balades, which tend onely to the nourishing of vice, & corrupting of youth.* (London : By John Daye, 1562)

<sup>167</sup> Beth Quitslund, "Singing Psalms for Fun and Profit", 239

<sup>168</sup> This survey of psalm singing as a prescriptive practice is derived from: Quitslund "Singing Psalms for Fun and Profit", 238-245

than the ears. Bayly suggested choosing psalms that were fit for certain times and purposes that 'people may the easilier commit to memorie'.<sup>169</sup>

To evaluate the practice of domestic psalm singing scholars point to the large numbers and different formats of Psalters produced. Prodigious numbers of editions and copies of *The Whole Book* were produced, exceeding the Bible itself. From 1567 there was a matching-format edition to every edition on the Bible, New Testament, or Book of Common Prayer and most years from the 1580s saw smaller format editions produced as well.<sup>170</sup> The variety of formats in which the Psalter was available suggests a widespread use in a variety of devotional settings and enthusiasm at all levels of the social scale.<sup>171</sup> Scholar Hannibal Hamlin identified numerous instances of Psalters bound with large family Bibles and it seems likely that this was a widespread practice.<sup>172</sup> As further evidence of widespread use, scholars point to the voluminous publishing of the 'Sternhold and Hopkins' to unison melodies, simple and complex harmonies designed for amateur use in the home.<sup>173</sup> Anecdotal evidence also gives a flavour of the popularity of domestic psalm singing.

Psalm singing was a popular part of domestic religion, particularly for the Godly. Nehemiah Wallington mentioned psalms as part of family devotion in one of his notebooks.<sup>174</sup> Lady Margaret Hoby recorded on Sunday 18 November 1599 that she 'talked and song psalmes with diverse that was with me'.<sup>175</sup> In John Bruen's family exercises psalm singing came between prayer and Bible reading in both the morning and the evening. Bruen would lead the tune 'and the rest in a sweet accord and harmony joyning with him'. Bruen was so much

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<sup>169</sup> Bayly, *The Practise of Pietie*, 464-465

<sup>170</sup> Quitslund, "Singing Psalms for Fun and Profit", 243

<sup>171</sup> Hamlin, *Psalm Culture*, 39-40

<sup>172</sup> Hamlin, *Psalm Culture*, 35

<sup>173</sup> Hamlin, *Psalm Culture*, 37-8

<sup>174</sup> Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington D.C., V.a. 436, 512

<sup>175</sup> *Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 38



delighted and affected with psalm singing that his heart would leap towards God.<sup>176</sup> Their psalm singing was not confined to the household or church; Bruen led his company in psalms on their way to and from church on the Sabbath in order to increase the joy in their hearts. Psalm 84, 'How pleasant is thy dwelling place', was a particular favourite. Hinde claimed that by these means, many neighbours were brought to a 'greater liking and love of the company and societie of Godschildren'.<sup>177</sup> As an ephemeral practice recapturing psalm singing in the home through archival evidence is difficult. It is likely to have been so ubiquitous and uncontroversial at this time it failed to draw comment.

Psalm singing's link with sabbatarianism in particular contributed to its popular association with Presbyterian and puritan circles. Indeed the examples mentioned above are all Sabbath examples. Yet before 1640 psalm singing was not a clear cut devotional and cultural signifier. Lewis Bayly's devotional manual, with its recommendation of psalm singing, was popular across the religious spectrum and there are examples of practice from conforming and even Laudian backgrounds. For instance, John Reading, described as 'High Church' by Quitslund, wrote 'how gracefull is it for private families to send out those sounds, like sweet odours, into the streets'.<sup>178</sup> Hannibal Hamlin identified a 'Sternhold and Hopkins' bound together with a rare Laudian *Book of Common Prayer*, that was suppressed for its supposedly Catholic attitude to the mass, and with numerous post-restoration prayer books. Another Psalter was bound together with the Bible in elaborate stitch work at Little Gidding by a member of the conspicuously conformist Ferrar circle.<sup>179</sup> Izaak Walton's *Life of George Herbert* included a

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<sup>176</sup> Hinde, *Faithfull Remonstrance*, 70-1

<sup>177</sup> Hinde, *Faithfull Remonstrance*, 210-12

<sup>178</sup> John Reading, *Dauids soliloque*, (London, 1627), 43, quoted in: Quitslund "Singing Psalms for Fun and Profit", 247-8

<sup>179</sup> Hamlin, *Psalm Culture*, 39-41

description of the devotional practices of the Ferrar family, which included reading or singing over the Psalter once in every 24 hours.<sup>180</sup>

After 1640, critique of the 'Sternhold and Hopkins' Psalter by Royalist and Restoration controversialists, such as Peter Heylyn and John Cosin, was often accompanied by attacks on Presbyterians and separatists. *The Whole Book of Psalms* had become a symbol of particular religious and political ideas and reinterpreting its relationship with the English Reformation helped steer the English church away from a practice that had hitherto been mainstream, but was now almost entirely associated with Puritans.<sup>181</sup> In a discourse about the word 'Puritan' Baxter claimed that 'when the wars had given Liberty to the rage of such as hated Puritanes, then ordinarily he was Puritane or Round-head that was heard to pray or sing a Psalm in his house, and such like'.<sup>182</sup> This association apparently had an effect on the popularity of the practice among moderate Puritans. Historian Horton Davis attributed the decline of the post-restoration practice of psalm singing among moderate Puritans to the Conventical Act, which forbade religious meetings of more than five people. Psalm singing was risky in that context due to its audible and clear indication of the existence of unauthorised religious assembly.<sup>183</sup> Ironically, psalm singing had fallen out of favour with many separatist groups. Baxter lamented that local people had turned to the sects 'deriding all that will sing a psalme in public or private'.<sup>184</sup> He described psalm singing as the 'chief delightful Exercise of my

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<sup>180</sup> Izaak Walton, *The life of Mr. George Herbert*, (London: Printed by Tho. Newcomb for Richard Marriott, 1670), 103

<sup>181</sup> Quitslund, *The Reformation in Rhyme*, p2-4

<sup>182</sup> N. H. Keeble and Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter, Vol I: 1638-1660*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), Letter 448, 303-305, Richard Baxter to Thomas Pierce (c.14 April 1658)

<sup>183</sup> Davies, *Worship of the English Puritans*, 172

<sup>184</sup> N. H. Keeble and Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter, Vol II: 1660-1690*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), Letter 799, 86-88, Richard Baxter to Richard Sargeant, 14 May 1670

Religion and my life' and recounted how he and wife would begin and close the day's conversation with a Psalm of praise.<sup>185</sup>

William Thomas, a moderate puritan writing in 1662, asserted that the singing of psalms in the family was a duty and lamented its neglect by many. He also lamented its negligent performance asking 'how many content themselves with keeping tune, and carrying on the Exercise with others in a formal way, without understanding the matter of the psalm, when they should sing with understanding, or with seeking to understand'. Thomas' defence of psalm singing was entirely scripturally based. Thomas believed that the 'domestical teaching' benefits of psalm singing helped maintain order and good knowledge in families. He targeted radical Protestants and sects who had 'learned (of late) to preach in Publick without a calling' and neglected teaching their families, which should be their calling. Psalm singing proved itself to be a useful demonstration of how to 'pray wisely and effectually' and it was a 'Heart-quickning Exercise'. It became therefore 'the holy Recreation of Christians, renewing their strength, and the vigor of their spirits when they are tired or grown flat with other Exercises'.<sup>186</sup> Psalm singing therefore performed an important role supporting prayer and other exercises of domestic religion. Despite the supposed decline of psalm singing post-Restoration, both the Harley and Gell families heeded the advice of Thomas and others, and continued to include psalm-singing in their family religion. Sir Edward Harley is said to have led a psalm morning and evening, while Katherine Gell raised her voice high 'in the ordinance of singing psalms'.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> N. H. Keeble and Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter, Vol II: 1660-1690*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), Letter 1077, 231-233, Richard Baxter to The Reader, Epistle to Poetical Fragments (1681), 7 August 1681

<sup>186</sup> Thomas, *Preservative of Piety*, 192-207

<sup>187</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70019, f.322; William Bagshaw, *De Spiritualibus Peccis*, 59

While increasing attention has been paid to psalm singing by historians, it is usually considered in relative isolation from its place in domestic devotion. Beth Quitslund acknowledges that psalm singing was a mechanism for carrying associated sanctity from liturgical space into domestic space and bringing spiritual order to the household. Its mode of participatory performance mirrored that in the church setting, creating an inclusive community or 'little congregation' in the home.<sup>188</sup> Pushing this further, psalm singing blurred the distinctions between liturgical and domestic worship; it was a key activity which challenged the neat notions of public and household religion. It provided a form of continuity between liturgical and domestic devotions. As Jonathan Willis pointed out, the texts and tunes employed in domestic psalm singing would have been learned aurally at church.<sup>189</sup> The image of John Bruen singing psalms while progressing with his household from church to home encapsulates this transitional practice.

### **Catechising and sermon repetition**

*The Practise of Pietie* prescribed a third activity to accompany family prayer: the householder should 'admonish them [the family] of some remarkeable good notes'. As Alec Ryrie notes, Lewis Bayly is aware of courting controversy as he backs himself up with patristic citations.<sup>190</sup> There was a fine line between the legitimate activities this might entail, such as catechising the household and repeating sermons, and elaborating and admonishing that might be interpreted as clandestine private preaching. Catechising involved testing members of the household, particularly children and servants, on their religious knowledge. Formal catechising used a manuscript or printed catechism designed especially for the purpose, composed in question and answer form. However, godly householders might also examine

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<sup>188</sup> Quitslund, "Singing the psalms", 250-2

<sup>189</sup> Jonathan Willis, *Church Music and Protestantism in Post-Reformation England*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 191

<sup>190</sup> Bayly, *The Practise of Pietie*, 437; Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 376

the understanding of a sermon or of that day's Bible chapter, and this might be understood as informal catechising.

Ian Green lamented the neglect of catechising by historians and addressed it with his monumental work *The Christian's ABC: Catechisms and Catechizing in England c.1530-1740* which encompassed both the practice of catechizing and an analysis of contemporary catechisms. Godly and conformable clergy alike were concerned to promote catechizing, seeing it as a support to the efforts of the minister in church. They encouraged it as the religious and moral duty of the householder and produced catechetical works for use in the home. For Green, the distinction was that the godly were more optimistic about the ability of the householder in their essential role of household corporate worship and instruction.<sup>191</sup> Through lay domestic catechising, clerics hoped for better success in public devotion. In doing so they explicitly acknowledge the role of domestic religion in fostering the Church and the interdependence of household and public religion.

As Ian Green demonstrates, the majority of evidence of catechizing practice comes from funeral sermons and hagiographical biographies.<sup>192</sup> Green believes references to parents teaching children and servants 'the most useful things for the benefit of their souls and bodies' or 'the first grounds and principles of religion' or some other kind of 'religious' or 'sweet instruction' referred to some kind of catechizing.<sup>193</sup> Consequently the majority of godly lives refer to domestic catechizing. Beyond the material survival of catechisms themselves, there is some archival evidence of catechizing. Lady Margaret Hoby mentioned domestic catechizing several times in her diary, sometimes her chaplain Mr Rhodes led while she observed. She also recalls numerous occasions where she has 'instructed [a member of the

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<sup>191</sup> Ian Green, *The Christian's ABC: Catechisms and Catechizing in England c.1530-1740*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 208-9

<sup>192</sup> Green, *The Christian's ABC*, 217

<sup>193</sup> Green, *The Christian's ABC*, 217-8

household] in som principles of relegion'.<sup>194</sup> Lady Mary Rich took responsibility for catechising her servants personally. In her diary she notes that on Sunday 9 December 1666 'after church, heard some of my maids say their catechism, and gave them good counsel.'<sup>195</sup> Sir Edward Harley advised his sons that they should say their catechism every day.<sup>196</sup>

Formal catechizing seems to have been mainly a Sabbath activity. Bayly recommended catechizing on the Sabbath after dinner along with psalm singing and repeating the morning sermon. This might not have always been the case. Lady Margaret Hoby first mentions 'Catchinge' on a Monday and there is a mention of catechising on a Thursday.<sup>197</sup> Informal catechising, such as testing understanding of a sermon or a day's chapter from the Bible, was a more fluid activity that might take place on ordinary days. During John Bruen's evening family worship he 'instructed and taught his family, out of that portion which hee tooke in the chapter, read at that time unto them, propounding and applying some wholesome doctrine, profitable for their godly edification'. He was indeed a 'pastor and teacher in his owne house' but was 'maligned, reproached, opposed and questioned abroad' for it.<sup>198</sup> This may speak more to the 1640s, when the biography of Bruen was published, than to attitudes earlier in the century. It reflects the complexity of family worship and the delicate balance between the moral duty to instruct one's family and usurping the role of the clergy.

One domestic religious activity which clearly overlapped with catechizing, was sermon repetition. This would involve the householder, or another member of the household, repeating the main points of the public sermon domestically and possibly elaborating on them. This was often a Sabbath activity. Bayly recommended that after dinner on the Sabbath the householder should 'call thy familie together *examine* what they haue learned in the

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<sup>194</sup> *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 3, 9, 12, 22, 30 and 32

<sup>195</sup> *Diary of Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick*, 92, 9 December 1666

<sup>196</sup> Cliffe, *The Puritan Gentry Besieged*, 136

<sup>197</sup> *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 4, 22

<sup>198</sup> Hinde, *A Faithfull Remonstrance*, 73-77

Sermon... Turne to the *proofes* which the Preacher alledged, and *rub* those good things ouer their memories againe.'<sup>199</sup> John Bruen was praised for the diligence with which he recorded the sermons he heard and carefully repeated on the journey home. Bruen also encouraged those in his household and 'Old Robert' was famed for using his girdle-like mnemonic device to not only recall the chapters of the Bible but also 'all the points and scriptures alleadged in a sermon'. He would then repeat the sermon afterwards for the benefit of himself and others.<sup>200</sup>

Sermon repetition became, over time, associated with puritan devotional patterns. The historian Arnold Hunt discussed Laudian polemical literature that portrayed sermon repetition as a subversive puritanical activity and argued that this was not mere rhetoric. Hunt suggested that sermon repetition was a key driver encouraging the laity 'to develop richer and more fulfilling routines of private devotion' that could substitute the public exercises of religion.<sup>201</sup> This may be overstating the case, although from mid-century it was only puritan authors who recommended sermon repetition. William Thomas dedicated a chapter to 'Repetition of Sermons in Families'. Thomas defended the practice of taking sermon notes but the 'use of Noting Sermons, which is not to lay them up in Books, and there leave them; but to repeat and communicate them to others'. He began with scriptural proofs and proceeded to reasons derived from reason. A second scanning, or new recalling, helps the sermon be 'better understood', 'better remembered', better digested', 'better laid up in the heart', and 'better expressed in the life'; or 'more familiar to us, and fruitful in us'. In order to emphasise orderliness of sermon repetition, Thomas compared it to a King's order delivered in person commanding great obedience. For Thomas, hearing sermons was a 'necessary duty' but

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<sup>199</sup> Bayly, *The Practise of Pietie*, 606-7

<sup>200</sup> Hinde, *A faithfull Remonstrance*, 58; Tara Hamling, "Old Robert's Girdle: Visual and Material Props for Protestant Piety in Post-Reformation England", in *Private and Domestic Devotion in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Jessica Martin and Alec Ryrie, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 135-164

<sup>201</sup> Arnold Hunt, *The Art of Hearing: English Preachers and Their Audiences, 1590-1640*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010), 79

'Repeating as an Auxiliary Exercise, and a part of our beneficial assistance'.<sup>202</sup> Thomas carefully defended sermon repetition and presented it as an orthodox amplification of the sermon in family religion, and family religion as entirely orderly.

Like catechising, sermon repetition demonstrates how public and domestic religion were intertwined. The public practice of attending and recording sermons was transported into the domestic arena and repurposed for household devotion. The chapter on reading and writing below will further explore the acts of reading and writing performed along that journey. More fundamentally, Arnold Hunt speculates that this second hearing or preaching may have been more important in the process of comprehending and internalising the lesson of the sermon.<sup>203</sup> It would then follow that the conversion, edification, or remonstrance inspired by the sermon was as much a product of the domestic afterlife of the sermon as its first performance in public worship.

Lady Margaret Hoby regularly mentioned 'hearing repetitions' in her diary. On 23 December 1599, she referred to 'examination of the sermons' as part of evening family prayer. These exercises usually took place on the Sabbath but occasionally they featured on another day of the week. On 25 December 1599, a Tuesday, Hoby heard repetition.<sup>204</sup> She normally mentions *hearing* repetition and it seems likely that her chaplain Mr Rhodes performed the repetition. Hoby stayed in London during the winter of 1600-1601. Her diary indicates that she took pleasure in the increased opportunity for hearing live sermons, yet sermon repetition remained an important part of domestic religion. A Mr Fuller, Lord Burghley's chaplain, seems to have frequently visited and repeated sermons to Hoby and family. On Sunday 25

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<sup>202</sup> Thomas, *Preservative of Piety*, 182-91

<sup>203</sup> Hunt, *The Art of Hearing*, 73

<sup>204</sup> *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 46, 142, 8, 27, 47



January 1601 in the afternoon, 'Mr fuller Came in, and he repeated to us the substance of Mr Egerton Sarmon' and returned to do the same on 22 February.<sup>205</sup>

Sermon repetition in family religion was probably the motivation for the voluminous sermon notes preserved in the archives of the Harleys, Gells, and D'Ewes. John Gell in particular left many sermon notebooks. Robert Harley reported to his father Sir Edward Harley the practice of his in-laws, the Foleys of Witley Court, which was to repeat the sermon over dinner.<sup>206</sup> Harley had grown up with this practice. In 1673 his mother Lady Abigail Harley had assured her husband Sir Edward that on the last Sabbath she had repeated the main heads of the sermon for the maids and the minister of Brampton Bryan, John Martin, had done so in the evening.<sup>207</sup> This domestic practice persisted; in December 1688 in a postscript to a letter of general family news Martha Harley informed her father Sir Edward that some visitors arrived 'just as we were going to repetishion in the evening'.<sup>208</sup>

## Conclusion

A contemporary account of Sir Edward Harley compared his 'worshipping of God in the family' to the scriptural example of Joshua:

How amiable and lovely a sight to see morning and evening his whole family from the meanest servant to the Eldest child worshipping God with great seriousness and sobriety, with good order and decency; his constant method was, he read a chapter...both in the old and new Testament, sung a psalm and pray'd; and each

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<sup>205</sup> *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 137, 139

<sup>206</sup> Cliffe, *The Puritan Gentry Besieged*, 104-5

<sup>207</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70012, f.10

<sup>208</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70118, Martha Harley to Sir Edward Harley, 14 December 1688

servant had a Bible, and were instructed in what was read, and in the principles of the Christian faith from the poor postboy to the waiting Gentleman.<sup>209</sup>

This is the literary equivalent of the visual representations of family prayer on funerary monuments explored above. Sir Edward here encapsulates the advice of the prescriptive authors on elements such as the when and who of family religion. As seen throughout the chapter, the reality of translating prescription into practice was one of adaptation and compromise. The practices of family religion were linked together and to other public and personal devotional activities in complex ways.

When Thomas Gouge, ejected minister and son of the famous author William Gouge, wrote in *The Christian Householder* in 1663, 'keep up a constant course of family worship: thus, shall you make your houses Bethels, houses of God and little churches', he meant it rhetorically.<sup>210</sup> For no writer in the Protestant mainstream genuinely advocated setting up the family home as an alternative to the parish church. Most went out of their way to assert the importance of public religion and link public and family worship together in an economy of prayer. However it is striking that the practices forming household worship - family prayer, communal Bible reading, sermon repetition, psalm singing, and catechising - mirror the practices of public religion. Each could be seen as a domestic version of an element of liturgical worship. Perhaps this is why, over the course of the century, some elements became more suspect denoting possible conventicles or potentially prejudicial to the authority and order of church and state.

The conformist approach to encouraging family worship was to provide set forms. Therefore communal Bible reading, formal catechising, and family prayer (when circumscribed by a set text) were seen as acceptable, valuable practices. However as these practices moved away

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<sup>209</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70019, f.322

<sup>210</sup> Thomas Gouge, *The Works of the Late Reverend and Pious Mr Thomas Gouge*, (Albany: George Lindsay, 1815), 262

from set forms and clerical control they became more liable to be interpreted as contentious excesses. Sermon repetition and informal catechising were two elements of family worship which became, by the mid seventeenth century, indelibly associated with more puritan devotional practices and considered as excesses by hostile observers. In both of these practices, the householder could be said to be performing as a minister in the household. Both practices, and extemporary family prayer, also left the confines of set forms and floated intermingled, layered, and reinterpreted texts, such as the Bible and preached sermons, in unique ways beyond clerical control. Psalm singing could not be interpreted in this way. Why, then, was it contentious by the second half of the seventeenth century? Possibly through its prominent place in the stereotypical characterisation of the psalm-singing 'Roundhead' soldier;<sup>211</sup> perhaps because the audible nature of psalm singing meant that it could transcend the confines of the house and have influence beyond the members of that single household. John Bruen was said to have converted neighbours to a 'greater liking and love of the company and societie of Godschildren' by psalm singing.<sup>212</sup> The puritan response was to emphasise the orderliness of their family religion. The Harley family is presented above as the epitome of order and orthodoxy.

The family religion practices outlined here played a significant role in constructing and projecting family identity. Family prayers and other communal religious practices would have bound the household together and given them a shared sense of purpose and belief. Engaging in communal religious exercises would be the basis to claim an identity as an ordered, religious, or elect family. The form or content of family prayer claimed a wider devotional identity for the household; as members of a self-identifying elect in the case of the

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<sup>211</sup> Alec Ryrie, "The psalms and confrontation in English and Scottish Protestantism", *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 101, (2010):114-137.

<sup>212</sup> Hinde, *A Faithfull Remonstrance*, 210-12

Harleys. The chapter on extraordinary communal devotions below will explore this in greater depth.

## Chapter 4: PERSONAL DOMESTIC DEVOTION

Individual and personal devotional practices expressed and enhanced personal piety and belief. By discussing personal and family devotion together as domestic religion, this thesis seeks to explore the non-liturgical devotional life holistically. Personal practices fed into, and acted as preparation for, family practices. Individual prayer - called private, secret, or closet prayer by contemporaries - was the most basic form of personal devotion. I will discuss the prescription and practice of ordinary individual prayer, that is prayer with regular times and patterns; followed by a brief consideration of extraordinary individual prayer: those moments where the spirit moved individuals to spontaneous exultation. Although certain aspects of early modern prayer have caught historians' attention, such as the controversy over set and extemporary forms of prayer discussed in the previous chapter, as a daily practice it remained, until recently, relatively elusive. Alec Ryrie's *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain*, a comprehensive exploration of the Protestant emotional life and its expression through prayer, has addressed this and shaped what follows.<sup>1</sup> The chapter seeks to firmly situate individual prayer within the framework of domestic religion, highlighting where it linked and intersected with other aspects of domestic religion and with public worship. Closely allied with individual prayer is the practice of meditation, the habitual pattern of reflective engagement with God conditioned by the use of a variety of stimuli. Indeed, many of the themes and patterns of behaviour were mirrored in prayer and meditation. The chapter concludes with the classic puritan practice of self-examination.

Self-examination was a combination of individual prayer and meditation that turned the focus on oneself and one's sins. The piety of Protestantism, and particularly Puritanism, has been characterised as interiorised. As outlined in the introduction, this has been linked to a wider

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<sup>1</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, passim

Weberian paradigm of the rise of the self, individualism, and capitalism; and has been particularly influential with scholars in the overlapping fields of literature, sociology, and cultural studies.<sup>2</sup> The response of some historians has been to highlight elements of godly sociability as a counterweight. For instance, Andrew Cambers' work stressed the communal and sociable elements of godly devotional reading as a direct response.<sup>3</sup> This chapter will show how even the seemingly most interiorized of personal devotions were less 'private' than previously thought and rooted in godly sociability and identity.

### **Individual prayer**

As we saw in the previous chapter, prescriptive authors were sensitive to the different types of prayer and the relationship between them. Samuel Slater, in his late seventeenth century guidance, insisted that one must make use of all types of prayer. He wrote 'we are expressly commanded to make use of all prayer...i.e. all kinds of holy prayer' therefore 'we may, and must, make use of all these kinds of prayers as opportunity offers and occasions do require.'<sup>4</sup> We saw above that some authors had prioritised the performance of family prayer over personal prayer for heads of households. Yet part of the responsibility of family governors was to ensure the rest of the family fulfilled the duty of personal prayer, and the most effective means was to provide an example, or to 'live in the performance of secret prayer'.<sup>5</sup> Non-conformist Oliver Heywood wanted to see householders 'promote and propagate this choice duty, commend it unto others practice' especially their families.<sup>6</sup> For Heywood, family prayer and closet prayer were two separate duties and 'god never made one duty to supersede another; you must not jostle out one work, because you are bound to perform another'. Slater reminded his audience that individual prayer must not shut out family prayer,

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<sup>2</sup> Webster, "Writing to redundancy", 40; Cambers, *Godly Reading*, 15-632

<sup>3</sup> Cambers, *Godly Reading*, 9; Cambers, "Reading, the Godly and Self-Writing in England", 797

<sup>4</sup> Slater, *An Earnest Call to Family Religion*, 19; Slater, *A discourse of Secret Prayer*, 18

<sup>5</sup> Slater, *An Earnest Call to Family Religion*, 168

<sup>6</sup> Oliver Heywood, *Closet-Prayer a Christian-duty*, 90-1

while earlier in the century George Downname strongly asserted the pre-eminence of public prayer: private prayer ‘must give place to the publick’.<sup>7</sup> That the prescriptive authors felt they had to remind their readers not to let individual devotions overshadow other duties suggests that, in reality, most were more concerned with their individual religious lives.

Individual and family prayer are often seen to mutually reinforce and encourage the performance of one another. We saw in the previous chapter that personal prayer was considered vital preparation for family prayer. More complex again is the relationship between prayer and other pious practices. Individual prayer is frequently invoked as an excellent preparation for a range of domestic religious activities, yet prescriptive writers also advocated careful preparation before performing prayer. While the idea of preparation for prayer may seem contradictory to notions of the spontaneity of extemporary prayer; for seventeenth century writers, spontaneous extemporary prayer still required careful deliberation and thought.<sup>8</sup>

Thorough preparation involved removing impediments to effectual prayer, such as worldly and wandering thoughts and distractions, and promoted good structure, expression, and composure for prayer.<sup>9</sup> Lewis Bayly and Elnathan Parr, in his contemporaneous prayer manual, advised Bible reading ‘for the increase of knowledge, and for the better calling home of the mind to the business in hand’, while Heywood believed reading scripture ‘may afford you suitable matter of prayer to God.’<sup>10</sup> The Downname brothers and Daniel Featley recommended meditation before prayer to stir up hearts to the zeal and fervency required in

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<sup>7</sup> Heywood, *Closet-Prayer a Christian-duty*, 107; Slater, *A discourse of Secret Prayer*, 167; Downname, *A Godly and Learned Treatise of Prayer*, 152

<sup>8</sup> C. Garrett, “The Rhetoric of Supplication: Prayer Theory in Seventeenth-Century England”, *Renaissance Quarterly*, 46, no 2, (1993): 349

<sup>9</sup> Downname, *A Godly and Learned Treatise of Prayer*, 141; Downname, *A Guide to Godlynesse*, 232; Heywood, *Closet-Prayer a Christian-duty*, 67-71

<sup>10</sup> Heywood, *Closet-Prayer a Christian-duty*, 70-1; Elnathan Parr, *Abba father: or, a plaine and short direction concerning private prayer Also, sundry godly admonitions concerning time and the well using of it*, (London: Imprinted by F. Kingston for Samuel Man, 1618), 8-9

effectual prayer.<sup>11</sup> Most of all, one should implore the assistance of God as all the preparation in the world will be ineffectual without the ‘spirit of grace and supplication’.<sup>12</sup> Daniel Featley described a framework for religious exercises in which each duty acted as preparation for another, creating a complex web of practices where one duty is ineffectual, or at least less effectual, if another is not done before as a preparative:

‘Premeditation is the preparation to private prayer; private to publicke; private, and publicke to the hearing the word; private, and publicke prayer, together with the hearing of the word to the worthie participation of the holy Sacrament. For the Sacrament receives strength and vigour from the word preached; the word preached from publicke prayer; publicke prayer from private Devotion; and that from premeditation.’<sup>13</sup>

The effect of this was to create a contiguous cycle of practices that co-opted people into performing all of the practices. In this programme, it is difficult to pick and choose practices, the whole needed to be performed for the individual to be effective and vice versa. There were exceptions however; John Preston believed ‘the best way to prepare us is the very dutie itself’ and that we should therefore not ‘stay till we have prepared ourselves by meditation, but to fall presently upon the dutie’.<sup>14</sup>

So, how were seventeenth century Protestants instructed to pray and did they follow these models provided in prescriptive literature? Historian Alec Ryrie highlights that most models of how to pray took the Bible as their inspiration.<sup>15</sup> The prescriptive authors wove together biblical instruction, precedent of the early Christians, and reason to lay out their schemes for the practice of prayer.

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<sup>11</sup> Downname, *A Godly and Learned Treatise of Prayer*, 143-4; Downname, *A Guide to Godlynesse*, 223; Featley, *Ancilla Pietatis*, 1, 18

<sup>12</sup> Downname, *A Guide to Godlynesse*, 224; Heywood, *Closet-Prayer a Christian-duty*, 75

<sup>13</sup> Featley, *Ancilla Pietatis*, 1

<sup>14</sup> John Preston, *The Saints Daily Exercise*, (London: Printed by W. Iones, 1629), 35

<sup>15</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 144



## Timing and length

The aspiration was a life of prayer, following the biblical instruction to pray continually. In contemporary prescription, this translated to an ordinary, regular scheme of prayer and prayer as the spirit moved. Alec Ryrie discerns a standard compromise in prescriptive literature by 1600 of ordinary individual prayer to be performed twice a day: in the morning before breakfast and in the evening, before or after a meal. Even this may have been aspirational, and some guides conceded prayer once a day as a bare minimum.<sup>16</sup> Later seventeenth century writers followed in the same mould. The conformist Jeremy Taylor suggested beginning and ending the day in God's service. The puritan Oliver Heywood hesitated to prescribe a certain rule of frequency, pointing to the variety of example in scripture, although he suggested that the usual example is morning and evening, or at least twice a day.<sup>17</sup> Right at the end of the period, Samuel Slater interpreted the scriptural command 'pray always' as that one should perform prayer in everything, in every condition, and every-day. He wrote 'praying every day morning and evening, is praying always'.<sup>18</sup>

Some authors were wary of set times for daily prayer. Heywood believed that having set times is not necessary or safe as we can never know what providence might prevent our performance.<sup>19</sup> John Brinsley meanwhile instructed, 'set yourselves times of praier, which the gaining of the world cannot make you forget.'<sup>20</sup> George Downname struck a compromise between these two positions by showing that set times were not commanded, or strictly

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<sup>16</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 149

<sup>17</sup> Taylor, *The Rule and Exercise of Holy Living*, 283; Heywood, *Closet-Prayer a Christian-duty*, 83

<sup>18</sup> Slater, *An Earnest Call to Family Religion*, 21-5

<sup>19</sup> Heywood, *Closet-Prayer a Christian-duty*, 119

<sup>20</sup> Preston, *The Saints Daily Exercise*, 89-90; John Brinsley, *The Second part of the true watch conteining the perfect rule and summe of prayer: so plainly set downe, that the weakest Christian, taking any paines, may in a very short space learn to pray of himselfe, with much assurance and comfort; both to get strength to observe the lords watch, and to helpe to turne away, or at least finde comfort in the evils that are to come*, (London: Printed F. K. for Samuel Macham, 1609), preface to the Christian reader

necessary, but were convenient. Times of the day which we do not let pass without personal prayer help our infirmity and relieve our natural backwardness in this duty.<sup>2122</sup>

Frequency in prayer was important to prescriptive writers and a high frequency was considered an important indicator of a godly life. The frequency of individual prayers was one way the authors of godly lives demonstrated how godly their subjects were. Some give generalized comments such as ‘She was much in prayers and tears’.<sup>23</sup> Sir Robert Harley ‘did deale much in prayer’ and would embark no business until he had sanctified it by prayer.<sup>24</sup> Meanwhile, Lady Mary Armyne performed individual prayer at least twice a day, while Mrs Mary Gunter and Lady Elizabeth Langham ‘were answerable to Daniels thrice a day’.<sup>25</sup> John Bruen outperformed most, as ‘seven times a day did hee reverently and conscionably performe this duty.’<sup>26</sup> Occasionally, writers put personal prayer into its wider context. Samuel Fairclough remarked of Nathaniel Barnardiston: ‘It was his practise to humble his soul before the lord in secret thrice every day, and sometimes oftener, if he could find opportunity; besides family duties and other days of extraordinary humiliation’.<sup>27</sup>

The subjects of these godly lives did, at least according to their biographers, meet the basic ideal of frequency in personal prayer, with some going beyond it. The authors of the godly

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<sup>21</sup> Downname, *A Godly and Learned Treatise of Prayer*, 160

<sup>22</sup> Heywood, *Closet-Prayer a Christian-duty*, 83; Parr, *Abba father*, 7; Downname, *A Guide to Godlynesse*, 238, 280, 370, 378, 390; Bayly, *The Practise of Pietie*, 458, 580

<sup>23</sup> Samuel Clarke, *A collection of the lives of ten eminent divines famous in their generations for learning, prudence, piety, and painfulness in the work of the ministry : whereunto is added the life of Gustavus Ericson, King of Sweden, who first reformed religion in that kingdome, and of some other eminent Christians*, (London: Printed for Willam Miller, 1662), 505. Reference to Mrs Margaret Corbet.

<sup>24</sup> Froyssell, *Yadidyah, or, the beloved disciple*, 102

<sup>25</sup> Samuel Clarke, *The lives of sundry eminent persons in this later age in two parts : I. of divines, II. of nobility and gentry of both sexes / by Samuel Clark ... ; printed and reviewed by himself just before his death ; to which is added his own life and the lives of the Countess of Suffolk, Sir Nathaniel Barnardiston, Mr. Richard Blackerby and Mr. Samuel Fairclough, drawn up by other hands*, (London : Printed for Thomas Simmons, 1683), part.2, 194, 137, 200

<sup>26</sup> Hinde, *A Faithfull Remonstrance*, 156

<sup>27</sup> Samuel Fairclough, *Hagioi axioi, or, The saints worthinesse and the worlds worthlesnesse both opened and declared in a sermon preached at the funerall of that eminently religious and highly honoured Knight Sr. Nathaniel Barnardiston, Aug. 26, 1653*, (London: Printed by R.D. for Tho. Newberry, 1653), 15

lives recommend their example to their readers and demonstrate that twice daily personal prayer was an achievable goal. In most cases, we are unable to independently verify that those people did indeed follow such a programme of personal prayer. However, other evidence shows at least some individuals did indeed engage in personal prayer at least twice a day, usually first thing in the morning and last thing at night. A typical day for Lady Margaret Hoby began with 'privat praers'; prayer is almost always the first act of the day recorded in her diary. Most days Lady Hoby finished with personal prayer before retiring and went to personal prayer at least twice a day, and often three times.<sup>28</sup> Towards the end of her diary as the entries become briefer the assumption is not that she discontinued the practice but that she no longer felt it necessary to note for each day.

In the prescriptive literature, there is no clear correlation between effectual prayer and the length of prayers; longer was not necessarily better. Elnathan Parr felt short fervent prayer to be more acceptable than long, but cold, prayers. He wrote that God 'measures not our devotion by the length...but by the inward meaning of the spirit'.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, for George Downname, the longer the prayer the better; so long as there was a 'variety of good matter uttered with the attention of the mind and vigour of affection'. Human corruption caused long prayers to be performed with negligence, distraction, and wandering thoughts; although this is no reason to simply commend short prayers. Downname's directions prescribed that 'wee fit and proportion our words to our matter, and both matter and words to our minds and hearts, our faith, fervency, devotion and attention'.<sup>30</sup> Conformist Taylor recommended shorter prayers as a remedy against tediousness of spirit. He advised 'what is cut off in the length of your prayers, supply in the earnestness of your spirit'. Prescriptions over the duration of individual prayer are dependent on a complex set of variables. It seems

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<sup>28</sup> *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, passim

<sup>29</sup> Parr, *Abba father*, 42-3

<sup>30</sup> Downname, *A Godly and Learned Treatise of Prayer*, 132; Downname, *A Guide to Godlynesse*, 232

that while long prayers are commendable, they are only so if they are also fervent, avoid repetition, and are appropriate to the occasion and motivation for prayer.

It is difficult to recapture the length of prayer in actual practice. Alec Ryrie suggested looking at the length of prayers printed for devotional use and concludes that fifteen to twenty minutes may have been typical.<sup>31</sup> Lewis Bayly provided a variety of prayers at different lengths, including particularly short ones, knowing that at times ‘thy spirits are dull, and thy minde not apt for Prayer, and holy devotion’. On these occasions one should not force oneself to pray overlong but should know that God accepts the will for the deed.<sup>32</sup> Many of the subjects of the godly lives spent a long time at their personal devotions, although rarely do the biographers use any more than general terms such as ‘long’ and ‘much’. John Ley feels the need to defend Jane Ratcliffe from accusations that her prayers were overlong, for they were abundant and eloquent and not ‘more copious in speech then patheticall in spirit.’<sup>33</sup> Lady Mary Vere spent several hours each day at her private devotions, however it is unlikely that this was all spent in prayer.<sup>34</sup> Conversely John Row's biographer commended his practice of short prayer with careful meditation in preference to long prayer. His prayers are described as not long, but so ‘substantial that he would comprehend the whole of religion in a short prayer’; the length exactly fitted to the words.<sup>35</sup> Even in the godly lives there is no agreement on the ideal length of personal prayer.

## Location

Prescriptive authors agreed that individuals should seek solitude for their personal prayers. The specific place prescribed is a closet, which Heywood defined as any secret place; ‘a close or a secret chamber, a withdrawing room, retiring place, where a person is not seen nor heard,

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<sup>31</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 153

<sup>32</sup> Bayly, *The Practise of Pietie*, 342

<sup>33</sup> Ley, *A Patterne of Pietie*, 59

<sup>34</sup> Clarke, *The Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons*, pt.2, 146

<sup>35</sup> Clarke, *The Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons*, pt.2, 110, 112

nor yet is disturbed in his devotions by any noise or commotion.’ According to Featley, private devotion ‘alwayes shuts herselfe up in her closet, desiring no eye to see her but her fathers in secret.’ A bed-chamber was a suitable alternative if a closet was not available. Bayly instructed ‘shut thy chamber-doore, and kneele downe at thy bed-side’ before beginning prayer.<sup>36</sup> Finding a fit place to pray is also an essential part of Elthanan Parr’s preparation for prayer. A solitary place, such as a closet, must be chosen because Christ himself chose a solitary place to pray, and so ‘by being sequestered from company we may the more fully descend into our owne hearts and be the freer from ostentation and hypocrisie and from distraction and wandring of mind’<sup>37</sup> Secrecy is more important to Slater than the actual space in which personal prayer is performed, but to attain secrecy one must ‘get as far as thou canst out of the hearing of others.’ Secrecy is maintained by using a low voice and never going to prayer ‘with a design, nor in such a manner that others may take notice of it for thy commendation.’ In similar form, Heywood said one must not ‘hold out a flag when we go to wait on god in the duty of prayer.’<sup>38</sup> Seeking solitude was recommended as a help against the distractions of family, and because it allows the individual to freely open his heart to God unselfconsciously and without hypocrisy.<sup>39</sup> The importance of solitude to the prescriptive authors is then clear and unanimous.

Yet privacy is a tricky concept for the early modern period. Privacy as we understand it, ‘as a space to be protected’, and the concept of a private life was not well developed. In the early part of the seventeenth century privacy was understood more as a condition of knowledge, known or secret.<sup>40</sup> Not only was the terminology fluid and the concept changing, but in many spheres, including prayer, privacy and solitude were viewed with suspicion. There was a

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<sup>36</sup> Heywood, *Closet-Prayer a Christian-duty*, 4; Featley, *Ancilla Pietatis*, 2; Bayly, *The Practise of Pietie*, 319

<sup>37</sup> Parr, *Abba father*, 8

<sup>38</sup> Slater, *A discourse of Secret Prayer*, 151-2; Heywood, *Closet-Prayer a Christian-duty*, 8

<sup>39</sup> Heywood, *Closet-Prayer a Christian-duty*, 20-5

<sup>40</sup> Longfellow, “my now solitary prayers”, 54

strand of ambivalence about secret prayer until well into the seventeenth century. Erica Longfellow's work, in particular, has highlighted early modern suspicion of solitude in prayer and the continued value placed on communal expressions of devotion. She wrote that even into the seventeenth century some Protestants, particularly the least-Calvinist element, felt communal prayer, especially public prayer, was more efficacious than solitary prayer.<sup>41</sup> The work of Longfellow and other historians such as Lena Orlin Cowen, reminds us that privacy and solitude may not have been as desirable as we assume.<sup>42</sup> Following this, Alec Ryrie suggested that solitude was not about 'invisibility or inaudibility, but a state of mind.'<sup>43</sup>

Research on the early modern closet, supposedly the archetypal private space for personal prayer, has had a strange fascination for historians. Longfellow attributes this to the value placed on a privacy that resembles our modern notion of privacy as a right. Alan Stewart's influential article asserted that the closet was a 'a secret nonpublic transactive space between two men behind a locked door'. Yet this is fiercely contested.<sup>44</sup> Lena Orlin Cowen argued that the development of the closet was owed more to the accumulation of valuable possessions rather than a search for personal privacy.<sup>45</sup> She demonstrates the multiple uses of closets from the evidence of inventories, which record closets filled with household goods, and the evidence for multiple people with access to known closets.<sup>46</sup> There are many meanings encoded onto closets, not least the tendency for closets to be defined as a highly gendered space. Andrew Cambers and Alec Ryrie write of the closet as predominantly a woman's space, while 'men had other private spaces, notably the study'.<sup>47</sup> Given that both closet and study were used to perform similar activities, perhaps it is gender notions which drive the

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<sup>41</sup> Longfellow, "My now solitary prayers", 58-61; Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 156

<sup>42</sup> Lena Cowen Orlin, *Locating Privacy in Tudor London*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 297

<sup>43</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 157

<sup>44</sup> Alan Stewart, "The Early Modern Closet Discovered", *Representations*, 50, (1995): 76-100; Longfellow, "Public private and the household", 316-7

<sup>45</sup> Cowen Orlin, *Locating Privacy*, 297-299

<sup>46</sup> Cowen Orlin, *Locating Privacy* 302-303

<sup>47</sup> Cambers, *Godly Reading*, 47; Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 160

impetus to make distinctions between these spaces and use a highly domesticated term such as 'closet' for the feminine version.

While there is plenty of evidence for the devotional use of closets, Longfellow cautions against the simple association of closet and a sense of privacy. Elizabeth Isham had access to a closet from a young age and her autobiography recalls its spiritual and profane uses. Isham had a strong sense of her closet being a privilege, rather than a right to privacy.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, personal prayer was not always a solitary activity, even in the closet. On 30 May 1600, instead of her typical start to the day in 'privat praers' Lady Margaret Hoby began 'After I was readie Mr Rhodes praied in my Chamber'. Likewise, on 28 April 1600 Hoby started with 'After I had praied with Mr Rhodes'.<sup>49</sup> We cannot be sure of the nature and format of these prayers: they may have prayed together or Rhodes may have observed Lady Hoby in his capacity as chaplain. Lady Mary Rich also prayed 'privately' with Mr. Lavendore, 'her spiritual friend', for her morning prayer on May 1 1668. Later that month she 'got doctor Walker to pray with me in my closet'.<sup>50</sup> It calls into question the clear division between personal prayer and household prayers, the supposed solitary nature of personal prayer and the supposed privacy of the closet and chamber. Did Rhodes and Lavendore join Lady Hoby and Lady Rich in their closets or did they use another space?

The subjects of the godly lives sought solitude in their closets for their personal prayers but did not necessarily achieve it. Jane Ratcliffe's 'prudence used as much privacy as might be, yet a singular gift (as shee had) could not bee hid but servants and some secret female friends must know it.'<sup>51</sup> Although Lady Mary Vere shut herself up in her closet for several hours a

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<sup>48</sup> Longfellow, "Public, Private and the household", 321-322

<sup>49</sup> *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 87, 79, see also 60, 29

<sup>50</sup> Mary Rich Warwick, *Memoir of Lady Warwick: Also Her Diary from A.D. 1666 to 1672, Now First Published. To which are added, extracts from her other writings*, (London: Religious Tract Society, 1847), 155, 1 May 1668; 156, 28 May 1668. Hereafter diary entries referenced as *Diary of Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick*; Anthony Walker's memoir of Lady Rich referenced as Walker, *Memoir of Lady Warwick*.

<sup>51</sup> Ley, *A Patterne of Pietie*, 61

day she could also not hide her fervent prayers from her attendants and maidens when they happened ‘near unto her closet door.’<sup>52</sup> Lady Mary Rich, the Countess of Warwick’s prayers, with their sighs and groans ‘would echo from her closet at a good distance’ and ‘thereby hath been overheard’. Remarkably her husband and a ‘godly minister’ conspired to expose her still further. ‘Her own lord (knowing her hours of prayers) once conveyed a grave and godly minister into a secret place, within hearing, who (being a man very able to judge) much admired her humble fervency.’<sup>53</sup> That these women were overheard despite their attempts to find solitude speaks to the reality of early modern homes and the difficulty of finding privacy in them.

Even supposing closets were in common use as spaces for personal prayer, very few people in Early Modern England had access to a closet and so other spaces were often used. In contrast to the prescriptive literature which looked inward to the small spaces in the house for solitude, in practice looking to the outdoors was often more effective.<sup>54</sup> John Bruen ‘did not confine himselfe for his prayers unto to any one place, neither within doores or without’ and in doing so, Hinde suggested, followed the example of Christ and the apostles who prayed in a variety of places. Indoors ‘hee had a variety of closets, studies, chambers’ and outdoors ‘he had his gardens, orchards, arbors, groves, woods and fields, walkes and shades.’<sup>55</sup> Hinde attributes John Bruen’s use of many different locations to a desire to avoid being ‘much observed to frequent one place, lest he should draw himself into some suspition of vanity or hypocrisie.’<sup>56</sup> Lady Margaret Hoby used her closet for personal prayer but also prayed in the

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<sup>52</sup> Clarke, *The Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons*, pt.2, 146

<sup>53</sup> Walker, *Memoir of Lady Warwick*, 28

<sup>54</sup> Mary Thomas Crane, “Illicit Privacy and Outdoor Spaces in Early Modern England”, *The Journal of Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 9 no 1, (2009), 4-22. Although she discusses sex and illicit use of the outdoors, a world away from the uses discussed here, Mary Thomas Crane makes some helpful comments on privacy and indoors and outdoors.

<sup>55</sup> Hinde, *A Faithfull Remonstrance*, 155-6

<sup>56</sup> Hinde, *A Faithfull Remonstrance*, 155-6



fields.<sup>57</sup> The spatial arrangements of Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick's devotions were dictated by seasons and weather. In the summer months, Rich would typically rise and go straight out into the garden to meditate before retiring indoors to read and pray. Lady Rich reveals one of her reasons for choosing the outdoors when she complains on 7 August 1666 that she 'was met by one in the walks about a work of charity, which hindred my being in private there; then when dressed, went into my closet, and committed myself to God in a short prayer.'<sup>58</sup> She clearly expected to find solitude there and was disappointed when that was disturbed. In the colder months, meanwhile, Rich 'retired' for reading meditation and prayer. A couple of diary entries specifically mention her closet, but it would be unwise to assume all Rich's 'retired' devotions took place there.

### **Voice and emotion**

Should prayers be said out loud? In what manner should an individual communicate his prayer to God? The voice used to speak to God need not be audible, for 'praier is not a lip but a hart labour and God heares the heart.'<sup>59</sup> John Preston insisted that the voice is not required as 'the spirit may speak to God, when the voice doth not.' Most prescriptive authors agreed, however, that using the voice in personal prayer was preferable, useful and convenient because it may help to quicken the heart, keep our thoughts from wandering and stir up our devotions.<sup>60</sup> Care must be taken to avoid being overheard as this is a 'grosse hypocrisie' and when there is a chance of being overheard it is more convenient to use 'the inward speech of the heart alone.'<sup>61</sup> Most important was to pray with fervency and zeal, for this is what will 'powre out our hearts like water before the lord.'<sup>62</sup> According to Preston fervency in prayer moves God to grant the mercy requested, and for him this fervency is 'crying to the lord,

<sup>57</sup> *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 17, 13 September 1599

<sup>58</sup> *Diary of Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick*, 75, 7 August 1666

<sup>59</sup> Parr, *Abba father*, 26

<sup>60</sup> Preston, *The Saints Daily Exercise*, 86; Parr, *Abba father*, 26-7; Downname, *A Guide to Godlynesse*, 230-1. Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 208-212 on voice in prayer

<sup>61</sup> Downname, *A Guide to Godlynesse*, 230-1; Downname, *A Godly and Learned Treatise of Prayer*, 125-6

<sup>62</sup> Downname, *A Guide to Godlynesse*, 110

wrestling with the lord, striving with him and giving him no rest.’<sup>63</sup> Daniel Featley denied that affectation, art, wit or language are a good thing in personal prayer and instead praised sincerity, simplicity, modesty, and zeal; ‘sighs are the figures that move almightie god and teares the fluent and most current rhetoricke before him.’<sup>64</sup> Such inarticulate, but verbal, expressions as tears, sighs, and groans are then to be used because they proceed from an humble and fervent spirit and in turn stir up our devotions even more.<sup>65</sup>

Although, according to prescription, the voice used in secret prayer should be known to no-one, the authors of godly lives are nonetheless able to describe their subjects’ voices in prayer. The device employed was overhearing the individual at prayer; whether accidentally, or like Lady Mary Rich, by design. Rich was described as ‘mighty and fervent in prayer, yea constant and abundant in it’ with sighs and groans in inaudible prayer. John Row’s private prayers were performed with much zeal and fervency and while his deportment was so reverent, ‘in his old age his heart would often melt and be dissolved into tears’.<sup>66</sup> Jane Ratcliffe’s prayers were ‘no dry devotion’ either ‘but steeped and drenched in showers of teares’. John Bruen performed his prayers with power and feeling, fervency, and sincerity of voice and ‘hee would so wrestle with god by prayers and teares...until...he had by praying and weeping prevailed with him’.<sup>67</sup> All were agreed that sincere inward emotion and zeal was more important than the outward appearance of prayer. Parr, for example, wrote ‘The noyse of our lips without the voice of the heart, is no more a true prayer, then ringing of belles or babbling of a parrot’.<sup>68</sup> However it was impossible for hagiographers to portray the inward condition of an individual’s heart. They can only infer such things from the outward

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<sup>63</sup> Preston, *The Saints Daily Exercise*, 116-7

<sup>64</sup> Featley, *Ancilla Pietatis*, 107-8

<sup>65</sup> Downname, *A Godly and Learned Treatise of Prayer*, 127

<sup>66</sup> Clarke, *The Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons*, pt.2, 170, 111

<sup>67</sup> Ley, *A Patterne of Pietie*, 61; Hinde, *A Faithfull Remonstrance*, 72

<sup>68</sup> Parr, *Abba father*, 44

performance of prayer, and therefore godly lives inevitably concentrated on such external matters as their perceived fervency and frequency.

Prescriptive authors recommended examining the heart and soul for evidence of faith, knowledge, and sincerity in order to ascertain whether one's inward affections and zeal match one's outward performance. Many individuals were concerned about their fervency in prayer, reflecting on it regularly in self-examination and diaries. Tears specifically were seen to be an important clue to true penitence and election, due to their involuntary nature. Alec Ryrie discussed tears in prayer, reflecting on a long list of English Protestants who testified to weeping during prayers.<sup>69</sup> More interesting are those who occasionally admitted to an inability to weep or to 'dulness in prayer'. On 7 August 1600 Lady Margaret Hoby recorded 'a privat Cold praier' which she believed to be a judgement for an unknown sin.<sup>70</sup> Conversely, fervent sorrow in prayer was also put down to judgement for sin: 'I came in to publecke pers and, after, to privat, wher I please the Lord to touch my hart with such sorrow, for some offence comitted'.<sup>71</sup> On December 10 1666 Lady Mary Rich read, meditated and prayed but her 'heart was something backward to the duty, and dull in it.' Three days later her 'wicked heart was dull and untoward in the prayer'. On balance, however, Lady Rich more frequently reported a heart that 'breathed after God'.<sup>72</sup> Anthony Walker's memoir immortalised her sighs and groans in prayer and Lady Rich's own diary reports the tears she poured out in prayer.

Prescriptive authors negotiated a careful compromise between fervour and feeling and the desire to distance themselves from 'enthusiasts' and proclaim due reverence. This was particularly true for later puritan authors who were vulnerable to association with more radical non-conformists. Slater, writing in the 1690s, began his list of instructions for secret

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<sup>69</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 187-195 on tears

<sup>70</sup> *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 104

<sup>71</sup> *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 99

<sup>72</sup> *Diary of Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick*, 92-3, 10 December 1666; 113, 29 May 1667

prayer with: 'Make thy secret approaches to God with the greatest solemnity of Spirit that thou canst'. While tears, sighs, and groans are good; these should not be uttered within the hearing of others and 'due decorum' should be maintained.<sup>73</sup>

### **Spontaneous ejaculatory prayer**

Thus far, the personal prayers explored have been the ordinary prayers which formed part of the regular, daily, planned, piety of an individual. It seems likely that individuals would have also performed spontaneous prayers of praise and thanksgiving throughout their daily lives. These extraordinary prayers were performed spontaneously as events dictated, as well as for the alleviation, petition, or thanksgiving for some particular sorrow, want, or blessing as they occurred.

It was commonly agreed by clerical authors that spontaneous and extemporary prayer should be part of the pious life. According to William Perkins, this sort of prayer 'haue of auncient time beene called *Ejaculations*, or the darts of the heart. And the time of this kind of prayer, is not determined, but is and may be used at any time, without exception'.<sup>74</sup> Caution was to be exercised though as some authors warned of the dangers of 'disorderly enthusias m'.<sup>75</sup> Despite that, conformist Taylor commended spontaneous prayer 'yet fail not to finde or make opportunities to worship God at some other times of the day; at least by ejaculations and short addresses: more or lesse, longer or shorter, solemnly or without solemnity, privately or publickly, as you can, or are permitted'.<sup>76</sup> The godly lives present the extraordinary prayers of some of their subjects as exemplars; John Row frequently made 'holy ejaculations which

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<sup>73</sup> Slater, *A discourse of closet (or secret) prayer*, 148-150

<sup>74</sup> William Perkins, *The whole treatise of the cases of conscience distinguished into three bookes: the first whereof is revised and corrected in sundrie places, and the other two annexed. Taught and deliuered by M. W. Perkins in his holy-day lectures, carefully examined by his owne briefes, and now published together for the common good, by T. Pickering Bachelour of Diuinitie. Whereunto is adioyned a twofold table: one of the heads and number of the questions propounded and resolved; another of the principall texts of Scripture vvhich are either explained, or vindicated from corrupt interpretation.* (Cambridge: published for the common good by T. P. Bachelour of Diuinitie, 1606), 282

<sup>75</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 147

<sup>76</sup> Taylor, *The Rule and Exercise of Holy Living*, 291

proceeded from the spiritual frame of heart' and Lady Alice Lucy used 'some short ejaculations' as she passed from one room to another.<sup>77</sup> This spatial dimension to Lady Lucy's practice is intriguing. The doorway signified a liminal physical and temporal space between the rooms of the household and activities of daily life in the household. Lady Lucy filled this space with brief personal prayer. As such, the doorway and what it signified was used as a stimulus to integrate the duty of prayer in to her daily life.<sup>78</sup> This was a way of spiritualising the mundane and avoiding the spiritual dullness that some reported in the face of the reality of daily life.

Jeremy Taylor made a distinction between ordinary solemn prayer and extraordinary, casual, and ejaculatory prayer when discussing posture and gesture. Taylor prescribed kneeling for regular prayer but for spontaneous ejaculatory prayer it was decent to simply lift up the hands and eyes to God in any other posture.<sup>79</sup> Lady Alice Lucy, when performing her short prayers would lift 'up her eyes and hands to god'.<sup>80</sup> Perhaps more than any other domestic practice it is challenging to access the reality of lived experience. It is easy to imagine the pious individuals we've encountered sending up their praises to God throughout the day. This aspect of piety was so embedded in daily life that it was rarely thought worthy of note and, as such, the ultimate spontaneous and ephemeral expression of piety is inaccessible to the historian.

## **Meditation**

The distinction between individual prayer and meditation was a fine one; contemporaries often barely made the distinction at all, referring to prayer and meditation in the same breath.

A useful differentiation is that prayer was addressed directly to God while meditation may

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<sup>77</sup> Clarke, *The Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons*, pt.2, 141, 111

<sup>78</sup> Tara Hamling discusses Lady Alice Lucy's use of movement through space to stimulate prayer, comparing this literal use of space to the use of imagined space in early modern memory techniques. Hamling, "Old Robert's Girdle", 144

<sup>79</sup> Taylor, *The Rule and Exercise of Holy Living*, 290

<sup>80</sup> Clarke, *The Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons*, pt.2, 141

have dwelt upon devotional topics more generally, or may have been addressed to oneself. Katherine Gell's spiritual confidant Robert Porter described meditation as 'a soules preaching to itself'.<sup>81</sup> Another useful way of understanding the distinction is to think of prayer as inspired by God, whereas meditation could take as its stimuli a range of events, media, and material conditions. Meditation in the seventeenth century was diverse; performed in a number of ways and settings. Indeed, historians have commented how writers of the time were reluctant to prescribe rules for its practice.<sup>82</sup>

Meditation was linked to, and deeply implicated in, many of the practices of domestic religion. Meditation was also frequently an intensely textual practice; much of the scholarly attention to early modern meditation has come from literary scholars, so it can be challenging to keep meditation as a practice rather than a literary form in mind. Meditation upon reading, scriptural or otherwise, was a popular devotional activity both in prescription and in practice. Meditation also intersected with writing, and many written meditations were published in the period or reside in the archives. For some historians, the surviving document is a record of the meditation after its performance. Alec Ryrie described Lady Margaret Hoby writing 'such meditations down for later reading'.<sup>83</sup> The inference here is of two separate activities: the meditation and writing it down. Yet the act of writing could be the performance of meditation itself. Equally, we should not lose sight of the acts of meditation that never made it on to the page.

The practice of meditation can be divided into extemporal and deliberate. Extemporal meditation was spontaneously triggered by daily sights and sounds, while deliberate meditation was purposely resolving to meditate upon devotional topics. For historians and

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<sup>81</sup> Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, Papers of the Gell Family of Hopton, D3287/47/7, Copy letters of spiritual consolation from Richard Baxter and Robert Parker to Mrs. Katherine Gell (nee Packer) on the death of her infant son, 71-91, Robert Porter to Katherine Gell, August 1655

<sup>82</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 116

<sup>83</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 111

contemporaries alike, Joseph Hall's *The Arte of Divine Meditation* published in 1606 was the most influential work of meditation theory. According to Hall, meditation was 'a bending of the mind upon some spiritual object, through divers formes of discourse, untill our thoughts come to an issue'.<sup>84</sup> The purpose of meditation was to influence the affections to action, for instance, to prayer. Hall's work on meditation, which largely dealt with deliberate meditation, set the tone for writing on the topic for the next few decades and he was cited and emulated by writers from a diversity of backgrounds.<sup>85</sup> Hall provided a flexible structure for deliberate meditation with an example meditation upon eternal life.

Meditations form the backbone of Lewis Bayly's *The Practice of Piety*. Bayly recommended deliberate meditation for important points in the day, including when waking and before retiring. He supplied his readers with a template and a structure for their own meditations. Bayly also provided a method for meditation upon one's daily chapter of the Bible.<sup>86</sup> We saw above the important place of meditation as a preparation for prayer, yet meditation could also begin as prayer. Hall described prayer as the 'common entrance' to meditation and entwined them together, writing, 'Prayer maketh way for Meditation; Meditation giveth matter, strength, and life to our prayers' and by prayer and meditation 'all other things are sanctified'.<sup>87</sup> Bayly prescribed Bible reading and meditating to come before prayer, for reading and meditating upon the word of God were 'the parents of prayer'.<sup>88</sup> Scripture provided the most common prompt and inspiration for deliberate meditation. For instance, the bulk of Lady Grace Mildmay's 'Book of Meditations' is comprised of written meditations upon scriptural passages. A typical entry opened with a biblical text and a meditation upon it

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<sup>84</sup> Joseph Hall, *The arte of diuine meditation profitable for all Christians to knowe and practise; exemplified with a large meditation of eternall life*, (London: By Humfrey Lownes, 1606), 6-7

<sup>85</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 113-5

<sup>86</sup> Bayly, *The Practise of Pietie*, passim

<sup>87</sup> Hall, *The Arte of Divine Meditation*, 78

<sup>88</sup> Bayly, *The Practise of Pietie*, 310-11

including cross-referenced scriptural passages and comments.<sup>89</sup> Lady Mary Rich often recorded in her diary the specific scriptural references which she read and meditated upon.<sup>90</sup>

In both the Harley and Gell archives reside miscellaneous sets of religious notes, often with scriptural references as titles. These notes may have been written meditations upon the day's verse.

The Gell family were interested in meditation as evidenced by a manuscript entitled 'Treatise of divine meditation' preserved among their papers. It is likely that this was a manuscript copy of the Presbyterian John Ball's treatise by the same name, which, according to Simon Ashe in the preface to the printed treatise, circulated in manuscript form among many hands.<sup>91</sup> It seems that Katherine Gell worried that she did not perform meditation satisfactorily. Robert Porter responded to her in August 1655 'and now lastly I come to your last complaint which is about meditation which be: you cant: doe at Mr Baxters height you run upon a double temptation: ye 1<sup>st</sup> is to give up ye hopes of heaven 2 is to neglect ye duty of set meditation'. Porter counselled her not to hold herself to such high expectations, reassuring her 'heaven will be very empty if non but such must enter' and that meditating at such a 'height' requires strength of spirit as well as 'truth of grace'. Gell took what she saw as her failure in meditation as a reflection of her spiritual state. In her despair, she gave up the practice. Porter encouraged her to take it up again: 'consider ye benefit of it it is ye usefulest exercises of all piety'. He suggested some things that may make meditation easier: 'to helpe yu may use any booke or sermon notes yu h[ave] upon yt subject yu wd med[itate] on'.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> L A Pollock, *With Faith and Physic: the Diary of a Tudor Gentlewoman – Lady Grace Mildmay, 1552-1620* (London: Collins & Brown, 1993)

<sup>90</sup> Randall Martin, "The Autobiography of Lady Grace Mildmay", *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 30, no 1, (1994): 34; *Diary of Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick*, 101 (2 February 1667)

<sup>91</sup> John Ball, *A treatise of divine meditation*, (London: Printed for H. Mortlock, 1660), A2r. John Ball was a minister in Cheshire and Staffordshire and was a lifelong friend of Julines Herring - a correspondent of Sir Robery Harley.

<sup>92</sup> Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, Papers of the Gell Family of Hopton, D3287/47/7, 71-91, Robert Porter to Katherine Gell, August 1655



Porter's pastoral experience shows through here and he acknowledged that a focus for meditation helps encourage the practice.

Joseph Hall refused to prescribe set times for meditation, commenting that some people would find the morning more suited, while others the evening.<sup>93</sup> The examples of lived experience show similar diversity in actual practice. Lady Margaret Hoby, early in the seventeenth century referred to 'meditation' accompanied by prayer most often in the late afternoon and early evening between dinner and supper.<sup>94</sup> Lady Mary Rich normally meditated alone for two hours each morning, but she occasionally recorded evening meditations in her diary as well.<sup>95</sup> Hall likewise sanctioned a variety of locations for meditation so long as solitude was sought. Note that he wrote 'sought' and not 'achieved', acknowledging that solitude was rare in the early modern world. He conceded that one person might find the closet most convenient while another 'when it beholdeth his heaven above and about him'.<sup>96</sup> Lady Margaret Hoby headed outside to meditate: on Friday 24 August 1599 she 'walked in the garden, meditating of the points of the sermon' she had heard earlier that day.<sup>97</sup> Lady Mary Rich made use of her closet but more often meditated while walking in the 'wilderness' part of her garden. Rich's diary reveals other spaces for her meditation, including while travelling. On 28 November 1666, Rich had a 'very serious meditations of the vanity of the world' while in a chair on the way to her sister Lady Ranelagh's.<sup>98</sup> Rich's biographer described her as an 'accomplished mistress' of the divine art of meditation 'both in set times and occasional'.<sup>99</sup> It was without doubt the structuring element to her personal devotional practice.

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<sup>93</sup> Hall, *The Arte of Divine Meditation*, 55-9

<sup>94</sup> *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 70-71

<sup>95</sup> *Diary of Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick*, 85, 25 October 1666; 113, 28 May 1667; 119, 1 July 1667

<sup>96</sup> Hall, *The Arte of Divine Meditation*, 49-50

<sup>97</sup> *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 9

<sup>98</sup> *Diary of Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick*, 90, 28 November 1666

<sup>99</sup> Walker, *Memoir of Lady Warwick*, 29

Occasional meditation was a 'means of redeeming time for spiritual purposes; it aims to capture the transient moment, and to convert it into a parcel of eternity'.<sup>100</sup> Hall insisted 'there is no creature, event, action, speech, which may not afford us new matter of Meditation'.<sup>101</sup> Yet Hall and contemporaries were reluctant to prescribe rules for its practice and instead promoted the value of example and experience. Scholar Marie Louise Coolahan made a link between occasional meditation and ejaculatory prayer, based on their spontaneous nature. The accessibility, simplicity, and spontaneity of occasional meditation was its attraction for a wide range of seventeenth century Protestants. One of the distinctions between spontaneous ejaculatory prayer and occasional meditation was the urge to write meditations. For Coolahan, it was the emphasis on example and experience in the contemporary writing about meditation that encouraged the writing of meditations.<sup>102</sup>

Lady Mary Rich wrote occasional meditations, some of which were published by Anthony Walker following her death. These meditations were inspired by every day and insignificant occurrences such as 'upon seeing a fine tablecloth taken off a dusty table'.<sup>103</sup> Writing her meditations deepened the experience of the practice and served as examples for her own future meditation. Rich recorded her satisfaction at re-reading her solemn and occasional meditations.<sup>104</sup> At the beginning of the century Lady Grace Mildmay received similar satisfaction in her written meditations calling her book of meditations 'the consolation of my soule, the joye of my hart & the stabilitie of my mynde'.<sup>105</sup> Mildmay herself had the idea to leave her meditations for the benefit of her children, for their 'profitt & consolation', while Walker chose to publish Rich's meditations as exemplary models for emulation.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Coolahan, "Practice of occasional meditation", 125

<sup>101</sup> Hall, *The Arte of Divine Meditation*, 20

<sup>102</sup> Coolahan, "Practice of occasional meditation", 126-7

<sup>103</sup> Walker, *Memoir of Lady Warwick*, 285-304

<sup>104</sup> *Diary of Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick*, 93, 13 December 1666

<sup>105</sup> Martin, "The Autobiography of Lady Grace Mildmay", 49

<sup>106</sup> Martin, "The Autobiography of Lady Grace Mildmay", 42; Walker, *Memoir of Lady Warwick*, 285-320

Although the examples of meditation in lived experience explored above were mainly women, this was an aspect of individual devotion which men also actively performed. Nehemiah Wallington, a London puritan artisan, left meditations among his writings, including a volume he described as 'A little book with blue leave called Morning Meditations' dated to 1652.<sup>107</sup> Sir Edward Harley composed and preserved written meditations each year on his birthday, meditations prompted by reflection on another year passed and inspired by the search for God's providences in his life.<sup>108</sup> In that sense, meditation had much in common the next and final personal devotional practice in this chapter, self-examination. I will consider meditation as a writing practice in the next chapter.

### **Self - examination**

Turning the meditative gaze in on oneself and one's sins was the basis for the individual practice of self-examination. Intense reflection upon one's sins and blessings from God is often interpreted as a characteristically puritan response to the doctrine of predestination. Predestination theology and its centrality to the definition of Puritanism has long been debated by historians.<sup>109</sup> Predestination was a keystone of Calvinist theology, about which there was general mainstream consensus until into the 1620s. However, even during this time there was an extra emphasis on predestination in puritan or godly piety. The doctrine of predestination has been extensively covered and well summarised by other historians.<sup>110</sup> The key aspect here is the hope of achieving knowledge or assurance of one's election to salvation by God's unalterable decree. Confidence in election came through the experience of unfeigned repentance and the acknowledgement of God's grace manifesting in the outward

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<sup>107</sup> Paul Seaver, *Wallington's World*, 201

<sup>108</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70062, Edward Harley's written meditations on his birthday, October 21 1700; Birthday meditations, October 21 1699; October 21 1695

<sup>109</sup> Summarised in: Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales "Introduction: The Puritan Ethos", in *The Culture of English Puritanism 1560-1700*, ed. Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), 7

<sup>110</sup> Leif Dixon, *Practical Predestinarians in England c.1590-1640*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014)

life.<sup>111</sup> Consequently searching the inward affections, outward behaviour, and providences of life for signs of true repentance and the grace of God became the route to assurance.

Historians are usually more interested in the potential negative consequences of this doctrine - the anxiety and despair that it could breed. But for every Nehemiah Wallington or Katherine Gell, who, as we shall see, both undoubtedly suffered despair when faced with the question of their election, there was a Brilliana Harley, who was reassured by the doctrine. As Alec Ryrie points out 'those who were untroubled, or positively comforted, by the doctrine of predestination did not require letters or treatises to be written to ease their consciences, and so we do not now hear their voices'.<sup>112</sup> The sources have misled in other ways too. If the purpose of a spiritual diary was to record sin, then can such a source really be used to conclude that the writer was obsessed with sin? To do so presupposes a modern understanding of a diary: that is a record and analysis of the whole self. Nevertheless, references to some anxiety regarding salvation were common and the practical response was to examine one's conscience to try and surmise whether one was among the elect. While the focus was often on one's sins, self-examination should also acknowledge God's favours and providences. The practice of self-examination was designed to prepare one to confess those sins to God through prayer and make an unfeigned repentance and resolution to amend. We therefore see the devotional cycle return to prayer.

For the godly Protestant, self-examination and confession was a daily activity that might take place in the morning or in the evening, or even both. *The Practise of Pietie* suggested meditating on one's sins before retiring to bed. Bayly wrote: 'consider with thy selfe...what sinne thou hast committed that day against God or Man: and what good thou hast omitted: and humble thy self for both' through confession and fervent praying. By performing self-

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<sup>111</sup> Alec Ryrie's summary is succinct: Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 27

<sup>112</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 29

examination last thing in the day one was 'thus making thy score even with Christ every night' and one would therefore have 'less to account for' at the final reckoning.<sup>113</sup> Later in the century Richard Baxter was a strong proponent of self-examination and devoted significant space to it in his works. In *A Christian Directory*, published just as hopes for comprehension of moderate non-conformists back within the church of England were high, he devoted less space to self-examination citing the coverage in former works. Baxter advised 'Take certain times to call your selves to a special strict account' and recommended weekly self-examination in preparation for the sabbath, before the sacrament, before any day of humiliation, and 'Yea, every night review the actions of the foregoing day. He that useth to call his conscience seriously to account, is likest to keep his accounts in order, and to be ready to give them up to Christ'.<sup>114</sup> Important to Baxter was that his readers not spend more time in the examining of the life than in the performing of their duties.

Sir Simonds D'Ewes regularly devoted whole days to performing thorough self-examination, but it seems likely that he also reflected on his sins on a daily basis as part of his diary writing and prayer practices. Lady Brilliana Harley urged daily self-examination upon her son Edward Harley. She was perhaps anxious about Edward's compliance, as she reminded him frequently.<sup>115</sup> Lady Margaret Hoby performed self-examination almost every day, usually in the early evening and usually alongside her other pious practices of prayer and meditation.<sup>116</sup> Hoby occasionally mentions specific times that she performed self-examination and prayer: for instance, on 20 July 1600 she went to private examination and prayer at 5 o'clock and on 20 August that year at 8 o'clock.<sup>117</sup> More typically however she recorded personal prayer and examination before supper and family devotion. Self-examination was closely integrated into

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<sup>113</sup> Bayly, *The Practise of Pietie*, 389-99

<sup>114</sup> Baxter, *A Christian Directory*, 211

<sup>115</sup> Thomas Taylor Lewis (ed.), *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley, Wife of Sir Robert Harley, Of Brampton Bryan, Knight of the Bath*, (London: Printed for the Camden Society, 1854), Letter LIII, 69, 1 November 1639

<sup>116</sup> Moody, *Private Life of an Elizabeth Lady*, xli

<sup>117</sup> *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 100, 106

the other individual practices of prayer and meditation, and was performed in the same temporal, physical, and emotional spaces.

How might this self-examination actually be performed? There were many resources to support and guide, and the publishing industry produced many collections of signs by which one could measure godliness and achieve assurance. Alec Ryrie cites some frequently published examples, for instance Nicholas Byfield's *The Signes*, published five times between 1614 and 1637.<sup>118</sup> Lists of sins and schemes for searching the conscience and confessing those sins to God were also allocated prominent space in general manuals of piety. The Ten Commandments were a popular scheme against which to examine the conscience; they were advocated by Lewis Bayly, for example. Bayly provides a prayer of confession with instructions on inserting sins of omission and commission in different places.<sup>119</sup> Byfield's *The Marrow of the Oracles of God* went a step further and included an exhaustive list of sins condemned in the Bible.<sup>120</sup> Richard Baxter's works provided much insight into performing self-examination, although the practice he recommended sounds challenging: 'draw forth, either from thy Memory, or in writing, the forementioned Marks, or Gospel-Conditions, or Descriptions of the Saints: Try them by Scripture, and convince thy Soul throughly of their infallible Truth.'<sup>121</sup> This was just the preparation, let alone the self-examination itself.

Alec Ryrie suggests that it would be hard to exaggerate the attention paid to this spiritual concern by early seventeenth century Protestants.<sup>122</sup> The attention paid by prescriptive writers would concur but how did this relate to practice? I would agree with Alec Ryrie that much

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<sup>118</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 39

<sup>119</sup> Bayly, *The Practise of Pietie*, 718

<sup>120</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 57

<sup>121</sup> Richard Baxter, *The saints everlasting rest, or, A treatise of the blessed state of the saints in their enjoyment of God in glory wherein is shewed its excellency and certainty, the misery of those that lose it, the way to attain it, and assurance of it, and how to live in the continual delightful forecasts of it and now published by Richard Baxter*, (London : Printed by Rob. White for Thomas Underhil and Francis Tyton, 1650), 430

<sup>122</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 39

attention was paid to self-examination. However, a study of self-examination which seeks out mentions of the practice does not, and cannot, quantify them against those for whom it was not a significant concern or regular practice. Only those performing the highest intensity version of this practice become visible through their written record or reflections.

Lady Margaret Hoby anticipated much of the advice that would later issue from prescriptive writers. She was acquainted with Nicholas Byfield personally, so it is possible he influenced her. On Monday 13 August 1599, Hoby's self-examination was based around her sins of 'omission and commition' for which she mourned.<sup>123</sup> Other descriptions of her practice seem more flippant: 'I examened my selfe, both of this daies work as of all the rest'.<sup>124</sup> As this was Hoby's note to herself it is unlikely to include a full description of her scheme of self-examination. It seems likely that Hoby adopted the method which suited her disposition, and the available time, that day. Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick did not record daily self-examination in her diary, but the practice was regular and often performed in preparation for receiving the Lord's Supper. On 20 September 1661, Rich performed self-examination as part of her meditation while walking in the 'wilderness'. She examined 'what my condition was, and what sins I was guilty of, that I might confess them'. When she was 'ready' she went to her closet for a 'large confession of my sins'.<sup>125</sup> But assurance did not seem to come easily to Rich: in February 1667, she begged God that she might be 'one of that happy number that should have everlasting joy.' There are many other examples of similar sentiment.<sup>126</sup> Other techniques of self-examination were more idiosyncratic and creative than the models

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<sup>123</sup> *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 4, 27

<sup>124</sup> *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 51

<sup>125</sup> *Diary of Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick*, 83, 20 September 1666

<sup>126</sup> *Diary of Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick*, 101, 2 February 1667

provided by the prescriptive writers. For instance, Lady Grace Mildmay confessed her sins by singing them in metrical psalms.<sup>127</sup>

Lady Brilliana Harley shared her practice of self-examination with her son Edward shortly after he had gone up to Oxford in 1638. She counselled him on how to keep watch over his precious soul and tie himself to a 'dayly self exemnation'. Brilliana recommended first considering the company he had been in, what was discussed, and how he was affected. Edward should then consider his religious discourses, observing what knowledge he was able to express and with what affection. If his knowledge came short, he should 'reade somethinge that may informe you in what you finde you know not' and if his affections were at fault he should 'goo to God, begg of him nwe affections to love those thinges which by nature we can not love'. Finally, his self-examination should call to mind whether he had been 'appt to take exceptions, or wheather any have provocked you, and examin your self how you tooke it.' This approach is more rooted in experience and daily events than the intellectual approach of schemes and lists offered in the prescriptive literature. Experimental piety was important to Lady Brilliana, and she relished the opportunity to share her experience with her son. She said 'this is the rule I take with myself and I thinke it is the best way to be aquanted with our owne harts'. Later that month, Lady Brilliana expressed the hope of seeing him gain assurance as a 'member of christ'. However, it was over two years later in April 1642 when she first mentioned Edward having attained such assurance, writing 'it is my greate comfort that you have made your God your confidence'.<sup>128</sup>

Lady Brilliana herself was thankful that she was not troubled by doubt, but she did admit that there were some 'things that of meself I can not beare them' and that there are 'blastes that trubell any calm'. However, Brilliana calmed her mind by settling 'upon that Rock, which is

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<sup>127</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 57

<sup>128</sup> Lewis, ed., *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter LVIII, 75, 29 November 1639; letter CXLVI, 154-5, 29 April 1642



higher than ourselves': God.<sup>129</sup> Brilliana Harley's response to predestination was a practical self-examination and unswerving trust in God. Historian Jacqueline Eales showed how Brilliana's commonplace book dated 1622, a year before her marriage to Sir Robert, was almost entirely devoted to detecting the elect by their behaviour. Her confidence in her own election shines through in this text in which she wrote as if she had no doubt about being part of the elect.<sup>130</sup> Brilliana did not add to her commonplace book following her marriage. Instead, her correspondence with her husband, and later her son, act as the venue for asserting her membership of the elect.

Elizabeth Clarke and Erica Longfellow argue that few prescriptive writers suggested writing down self-examination experiences until puritan self-writing had already become commonplace in the mid-seventeenth century. They write 'As a nascent genre, Puritan self-writing seems to have grown organically, as believers discovered that it stimulated memory and encouraged faith in God's providence'.<sup>131</sup> However, there were some authors, including Richard Rogers in 1630, Nicholas Byfield in 1619 and Daniel Dyke in 1616, recommending written records of sin in the first half of the century.<sup>132</sup> The surviving archival evidence demonstrates that many people found it useful to write during self-examination; recording their sins, blessings, and the providence of God in a variety of formats. Both Sir Simonds D'Ewes and Katherine Gell, whose self-examination is considered below, turned to pen and paper to help make sense of their search for assurance. As Tom Webster wrote of spiritual diaries 'writing becomes a way of validating experience' and makes 'past experience concrete

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<sup>129</sup> Lewis, ed., *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter LIII, 69-70, 1 November 1639

<sup>130</sup> Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads*, 49-52

<sup>131</sup> Elizabeth Clarke and Erica Longfellow 'Introduction to the online edition. '[E]xamine my life': writing the self in the early seventeenth century', [http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/ren/projects/isham/texts/ Elizabeth Isham's Autobiographical Writings](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/ren/projects/isham/texts/Elizabeth_Isham's_Autobiographical_Writings), Warwick Centre for the Study of the Renaissance, accessed 5 March 2017

<sup>132</sup> Webster, "Writing to redundancy", 38; Rylie, *Being Protestant*, 57-8; David Booy, *The Notebooks of Nehemiah Wallington, 1618-1654: A Selection*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 12

and accessible'.<sup>133</sup> The written record became a material site of self-examination. It is evidence of the performance of the duty and manifest proof of the experience of assurance. Some historians have credited the doctrine of predestination and the practice of self-examination for the development of the spiritual diary, although the causal relationship is far from clear.<sup>134</sup> It was also common for those undertaking self-examination to use supporting texts in the process. These might be the lists in the prescriptive literature mentioned above, a list composed for personal use, or the written record of previous sessions of self-examination. Predestination and its consequences for practical piety, such as self-examination and the diaristic materials it produced, has been seen by some as evidence of a growing sense of individuality and interiorisation of piety during this period. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, this has been reappraised by historians in general terms. Yet self-examination itself has not normally received that reappraisal. Historian Alec Ryrie took a new approach to self-examination, highlighting continuities with Protestantism's earliest days and even with the pre-Reformation Catholic world. Ryrie nevertheless sees self-examination and salvation-anxiety as self-absorption and argues that self-examination involved close attention to feelings as emotions are a form of revelation.<sup>135</sup> I argue that the search for assurance through self-examination was not an exclusively interiorised piety.

Conceptually, to gain assurance was to take your place among the elect; and recognising the signs of election in one's self and in others was the basis around which the godly community was formed. Although self-examination was an individual practice, this process took place against a backdrop of scripture, clerical guidance, and social conformity. As Margo Todd wrote 'Because puritan self-fashioning was conditioned by scriptural authority and models, its

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<sup>133</sup> Webster, "Writing to redundancy", 47

<sup>134</sup> Effie Botonaki, "Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen's Spiritual Diaries: Self-Examination, Covenanting and Account Keeping", *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 30, no 1, (1999): 3-21, 4; Webster, "Writing to redundancy", 38

<sup>135</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 40-1

result was an identification that was fundamentally communal rather than individualistic in nature'.<sup>136</sup> Furthermore, the actual practice and performance of self-examination was frequently a social activity. This might include communal performance of self-examination or sharing written texts produced by self-examination. Protestants had abandoned auricular confession and to some extent the individual practice of self-examination had replaced this. However some prescriptive authors still recommended seeking spiritual guidance when troubled by the results of one's self-examination.<sup>137</sup> Katherine Gell's practice of self-examination, as revealed in her correspondence with her spiritual advisors, and Simond D'Ewes' practice, as revealed in his autobiography, illustrate both main themes of this section.

Katherine Gell wrote her marks of election in a book kept specifically for the purpose. She described her self-examination practice in her correspondence with Richard Baxter: 'I have this 2 years kept a diary of spiritual matters whereby I can tell the frame of my heart in every duty and ordinance & what thoughts passe too & fro or stay there; before I took this course my way for self-examination was to call to remembrance as many sins as I could'.<sup>138</sup> Gell sent the book to her confidant Robert Porter and asked him to evaluate her hopes of election. He returned the book reassuring her that 'truly yr markes are very sound yr experiences very sure'. Almost as if he expects her to disbelieve him, he follows up with 'I doe not flatter you'.<sup>139</sup> This was a question Gell and Porter returned to multiple times in their correspondence, with Gell revealing a crippling despair of election. In a later letter, Porter counsels Gell against reflecting too deeply on her sins without also considering the fullness and love of Christ: 'see for ys Mr Baxter in his direct: for spt peace & comf: fm page 533 to

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<sup>136</sup> Margo Todd, "Puritan Self-Fashioning: The Diary of Samuel Ward", *Journal of British Studies*, 31, no 3 (1992): 236-264, 252. I will return to issues of self-fashioning in self-writing in a subsequent chapter.

<sup>137</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 396

<sup>138</sup> N. H. Keeble and Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter, Vol I: 1638-1660*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), Letter 404 (10 November 1657)

<sup>139</sup> Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, Papers of the Gell Family of Hopton, D3287/47/7, 11-12, Robert Porter to Katherine Gell, December 15 1654

538 read it seriously'.<sup>140</sup> Richard Baxter's directions counsel that 'Chearful Amendment' will better please God than 'self-tormenting fears'.<sup>141</sup> Self-examination should be a positive process as well as negative.

Gell turned to Richard Baxter himself with her fears concerning her election. She sought his advice on whether she should use her diary in self-examination, writing 'now in this diary I find many more [sins] than I could ever remember without it & non that I can remember are out of it. Therefore I desire to know whether the serious reading of this diary...may goe for this duty of self-examination'.<sup>142</sup> Baxter was well apprised of Gell's tendency to despair by this point in their correspondence and he counselled:

'yr diary may well be used as yr helpe adjoining ye remembrance of yr most notable failing recorded since; but I w[oul]d n[ot]: advise yu to spend soe much time as ye thought of recounting & writing down of every ordinary infirmity wd require for such alas we carry ym with us soe constantly yt we need no writing to tell us yt we h: ym & ye frequent recording ye same infirmity over & over will make us as customary & senseless as if we recorded ym nt; or else will tempt us to dispaire bec: we live still in ye same recorded sins & ye time soe spent may be better improved.'

Instead, Baxter advised that Gell record her 'present mercyes' in her state of spiritual calm and comfort, which he feared would be short-lived.<sup>143</sup>

Katherine Gell's practice of self-examination was therefore intensely textual. Her self-examination involved writing her evidence of election in a dedicated text which she later used in self-examination sessions. However, these texts are not solitary musings on Gell's election.

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<sup>140</sup> Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, Gell Family of Hopton, D3287/47/7 , 61, Robert Porter to Katherine Gell, June 1655

<sup>141</sup> Richard Baxter, *The right method for a settled peace of conscience, and spiritual comfort in 32 directions : written for the use of a troubled friend*, (London: Printed for T. Underhil, F. Tyton, and W. Raybould, 1653), 535-7

<sup>142</sup> Keeble, Nuttall, *Calendar of the Correspondence*, letter 404, Katherine Gell to Richard Baxter, 10 November 1657, 273

<sup>143</sup> Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, Gell Family of Hopton, D3287/47/7, 226, Richard Baxter to Katherine Gell, 15 December 1657; Keeble and Nuttall, *Calendar of the Correspondence*, letter 412, Richard Baxter to Katherine Gell, 15 December 1657, 280

Her self-examination, while perhaps performed in solitude, was shared with her spiritual advisors across considerable distances in her correspondence. Gell openly discussed her marks of election with both Robert Porter and Richard Baxter and even sent her diary to Porter for him to read, evaluate, and respond. The desire to achieve assurance of election was a vital and shared concern among the seventeenth century Godly and one which bound them together socially. Discussing her self-examination and election in correspondence with prominent ministers is one way in which Gell asserts her place among the Godly elite. The record of her sins became a material object through which Gell negotiated her elect identity with herself, and with the wider community.

Simonds D'Ewes' 'assurance' was a written record of his sins and the signs, marks, or evidence of the work of God's grace within his soul. Sadly this document is not known to survive but helpfully D'Ewes describes his practice of self-examination in detail in his autobiography. On 1 December 1627, a day of fast and humiliation, he 'drew divers signes of my assurance of a better life from the grace of repentance having before gone through the graces of knowledge, faith, hope, love, zeale, patience, humilitie and joy and drawen severall markes from them on like days of humiliacion for the greater parte.'<sup>144</sup> He finished his assurance on 19 January 1628 'consisting of threescore and fowre signes or markes drawen from severall graces.'<sup>145</sup> D'Ewes had systematically gone through the various categories of grace conferred upon him by God and carefully recorded sixty four marks as evidence of his election and salvation. He completed that task with much haste and faster than he 'at first intended or ever purposed, but the miseries and devastacions of gods church dailie encreasing it made mee hasten to the finishing of my blessed assurance of heaven hereafter, not knowing

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<sup>144</sup> British Library, London, Harley Manuscripts, 646, ff.107v-108r, On 29 December 1627 he 'finished my signes drawen from obedience to God, and the magistrate and from the mercie of good workes.'

<sup>145</sup> British Library, London, Harley Manuscripts, 646, f.109v

how soon I might be called to a triall.’<sup>146</sup> He considered his search for the signs of grace as a race against time; either from a fear of his own individual persecution or from an expectation of the end of days.

D'Ewes continued to use his 'assurance' in his self-examination, for he made ‘some small alteracions in those signes aftewardes and when I turned them into the latine tounge a little enlarged divers of them and enriched the margent with further proofes and authorities’. He also attached a ‘large and an elabourate preface in latine to it’.<sup>147</sup> The attention paid to this document shows how central it was to D'Ewes, and how important it was in structuring his practice of self-examination. D'Ewes ‘found much comforte and reposednes of spirit’ from his assurance and was ‘more careful then ever before to walke warilie, to avoide sinne and to lead a godlie life.’<sup>148</sup> Attaining assurance made him all the more anxious to retain it. D'Ewes considers this a riposte to those ‘who say assurance brings foorth presumption and a careless wicked life’ and asserts that assurance is conditional and fear of losing it will be rather a means to increase grace and virtue. Yet D'Ewes does not seem to have experienced the anguish that Gell did, and his assurance bought him confidence of election and spiritual peace. Textual proof or evidence of his piety was clearly important to D'Ewes for he also kept a cipher diary and composed his autobiography. These documents combined gave D'Ewes written verification of his life of piety and election.

D'Ewes' autobiography also reveals how self-examination could be a communal and social activity. D'Ewes recalled that on 17 December 1627, his wife Anne joined him in a day of fasting and humiliation for the first time. They used this opportunity to begin ‘to draw most blaessed and certaine signes of her owne future happiness after death from severall graces.’<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> British Library, London, Harley Manuscripts, 646, f.108

<sup>147</sup> British Library, London, Harley Manuscripts, 646, f.109v, f.105

<sup>148</sup> British Library, London, Harley Manuscripts, 646, f.109v

<sup>149</sup> British Library, London, Harley Manuscripts, 646, f.108

They completed this project on 27 June 1629 when 'by my assistance she finished the markes of her evidence to a better life, which shee had begun and advanced well forward on other daies of our former conjoined fasting and humiliacion together.'<sup>150</sup> Anne's self-examination was a communal effort by husband and wife and resulted in text that would be preserved and reused in future self-examination. The D'Ewes family show how the supposedly individual practice of self-examination could be a social religious practice. By encouraging and aiding Anne in this way, D'Ewes was fulfilling the duty of a husband to care for the salvation and attend to the religious instruction of his wife.

No study of self-examination would be complete without Nehemiah Wallington; so beloved of historians not only for his surviving notebooks, but also because of his relatively lowly social status as a urban artisan woodturner in seventeenth century London.<sup>151</sup> Much has been made of the suicidal despair for his self-confessed vile nature and heinous sins that Nehemiah experienced as a young man. As he battled to overcome this despair, which returned in regular bouts of melancholy throughout his life, Wallington committed to begin a new life of discipline and examination. Wallington's self-examination illuminates the themes I have focussed on thus far. Wallington also serves as an excellent example of a third theme: the tendency among the godly to evaluate their performance of self-examination. In addition to the performance of self-examination and its possible written record, there were those, such as Wallington, who reflected on their self-examination itself and how much comfort, or not, they received therein.

Wallington used the early mornings to seek solitude for his religious practice, study, and self-examination and often returned to examination in the evening. Entries in 'An Extract of the Passages of my Life' record his 3am reveille and evening examination of his day. In 1629

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<sup>150</sup> British Library, London, Harley Manuscripts, 646, f.122r

<sup>151</sup> Seaver, *Wallington's World*; passim; Booy, *The Notebooks of Nehemiah Wallington*, passim

Wallington began a written record of his sins. He remembered this in the surviving notebook entitled *A Record of Gods Marcys, or a Thankfull Remembrance* 'In Januari the 1day of 1629 I begane to take another corsse with myselfe to overcome my corrupt nature and that was to write downe my sinnes in a booke'. He claimed this was not to count his sins or 'looke for perficxtion in this life' but to get a sense of the debt he owed God and to humble himself.<sup>152</sup> Wallington would also keep a diary of the 'comings and goings of the spirit or the groth of a Christian', written lists of articles to live his life by and 'all the checks and chidings of my conscience'.<sup>153</sup> He regularly records his emotional response to his examination in his journals, charting the course of his comfort or despair. These written documents played a large role in Wallington's personal religious practice; simultaneously serving as a material site, a record of, and stimulus to that practice. There are references throughout the notebooks to Wallington rereading his entries as part of subsequent self-examination: as 'I would have Examined my Examinations but it was to hard a worke for mee'.<sup>154</sup>

Earlier in the century, Lady Margaret Hoby also performed self-examination and regularly noted its effect in her diary, although with significantly less hand-wringing than Wallington. Sometimes Hoby's self-examination gave her comfort and confidence. In August 1599, she wrote 'I retourned [*page torn*] examenation and praier at which time it pleased the Lord to give me sure testimonie of his favor in Christ'.<sup>155</sup> Yet, only days later Hoby was bemoaning her performance of the same duty: 'I praied and examened my self, not so perteculerly as I ought to have don' and that was not the only time.<sup>156</sup> She valued the practice of self-examination highly, remarking that without it she might not have remembered the Lord

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<sup>152</sup> Seaver, *Wallington's World*, 35; Booy, *The Notebooks of Nehemiah Wallington*, 49-50

<sup>153</sup> Booy, *The Notebooks of Nehemiah Wallington*, 49-50

<sup>154</sup> Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington D.C., Va.436, 534

<sup>155</sup> *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 6, 25 August 1600. 'I returned to private examenation, havinge good quiatt of conscience and rest of the spiritt', *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 108

<sup>156</sup> *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 7, 8



pardoned her sins according to his promise.<sup>157</sup> It is therefore vital to her self-identification as one of the elect.

## Conclusion

As individual prayer was the fundamental practice of personal piety, an exploration of the prescription and practice helps to establish the underlying rhythm of devotional life. Individual prayer is the least controversial aspect of domestic prayer in this period, as all mainstream Protestants practiced personal prayer in similar ways. Viewed from his primary focus on prayer, Alec Ryrie's belief that 'early modern Protestantism was a broad-based religious culture' is persuasive. Personal prayer and the way it was performed caused less consternation and disagreement than family prayer. Contemporary attitudes to the relationship between personal prayer and other types of prayer were, however, inflected by denominational background with an increased sensitivity to defending the primacy of public prayer developing over time. The performance of personal prayer, in terms of the voluble expression of fervour and emotion, was also more sensitive after the interregnum years as Anglicans condemned the 'enthusiasm' of dissenting sects and moderate Puritans sought to distance themselves from association with those sects.

The individual practices explored here, prayer, meditation, and self-examination were deeply interwoven. They were often performed at the same time, in the same space, and in the same emotional register. They were the means through which religion was made personal. Yet, as established, they were far from what we understand as 'private'. The reality of life in seventeenth century households meant personal devotional practices were available for observation and overhearing. The contemporary use of the phrases 'closet' and 'secret' prayer as rhetorical shorthand have distracted historians from the wide variety of spatial contexts for personal devotions, as well as examples of individual devotion in company. The practices of

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<sup>157</sup> *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 16

personal religion were not exclusively concerned with an isolated interior piety. Individual prayer, meditation, and self-examination were intertwined in complex ways with family religion, public religion, and the wider community. The practices and the piety expressed through them were often communal, sociable by nature, and expressed an identity dependent on shared beliefs and meanings. Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick's personal piety, as praised and presented by her domestic chaplain Anthony Walker, effectively demonstrates this in all aspects of individual ordinary religion.

Walker profiled Rich's attentive practice of self-examination, prayer or 'heart's ease' and meditation in which she excelled. He emphasised the solitary nature of these practices, writing 'she was so far from a vain affected ostentation of her gifts, that I cannot name on person with whom she prayer' and 'she usually walked two hours daily in the morning to meditate alone'. However in the same breath, Walker also reveals the sociable and communal nature of her personal practices. He was proud to report that Rich had asked him to read her account of self-examination and 'with all free and faithfulness, to give her my judgment of it, which I could not but do with much approbation'. Furthermore, he emphasised the point that Rich wrote her account 'with her own hand', perhaps indicating it was common for such a document to be dictated. On Rich's meditations, Walker notes that she left behind whole volumes and he appended some examples to his published funeral sermon.<sup>158</sup> As noted above, written meditations were often intended for communal consumption and it's likely that Rich circulated manuscript versions among friends and relatives. Although Walker claimed not to know anyone who prayed with Rich, her diary specifically referenced performing prayer with a spiritual friend Mr Lavendore and her domestic chaplain Thomas Woodroffe on more than one occasion.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Walker, *Memoir of Lady Warwick*, 29

<sup>159</sup> *Diary of Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick*, 155, 1 May 1668

## Chapter 5: READING AND WRITING

This chapter explores the interlinked practices of reading and writing and their place in domestic religion. Not only can details of domestic religious routines be gleaned from books, diaries, commonplace books, and letters; their very existence is material evidence of devotional activities, such as prayer or meditation. In some cases, these material artefacts are the only archival evidence for the performance of religious practices.

The historiography of early modern reading is closely interlinked with book history and the overlapping oral, manuscript, and print cultures. It attracts scholars from multi-disciplinary perspectives and this multiplicity of parallel approaches to reading make tracing the historiography challenging, defying as it does linear development. Heidi Brayman Hackel and Andrew Cambers provide excellent surveys.<sup>1</sup> One significant concern has been to identify general models of reading. For the seventeenth century, the model of the active reader appropriating the text has been particularly influential drawing on the work of Lisa Jardine, Anthony Grafton, and William Sherman on the goal-oriented reading of professional scholars.<sup>2</sup> The historiography has generally drawn a distinction between the 'active' appropriating reader and the submissive 'text led' reader.<sup>3</sup> More recent work, by Brayman Hackel and others, attends to the reading practices of less intellectually privileged subjects.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material*, 3-8; Cambers, *Godly Reading*, 24-33. The approaches to the history of reading include work on printing and print culture, the development of literacy, literary studies with its attention to text, authorship and reader-response and hugely influential micro-histories of individual books, texts and readers.

<sup>2</sup> L. Jardine and A. Grafton, "Studied for Action - How Harvey, Gabriel Read His Livy", *Past & Present*, 129, (1990), 30-78; William H. Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008)

<sup>3</sup> Cambers, "Readers marks", 216, 230

<sup>4</sup> Heidi Brayman Hackel, 'The Countess of Bridgewater's London Library' *Books and Readers in Early Modern England: Material Studies*, ed. Jennifer Anderson and Elizabeth Sauer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 138-159; Ramona Wray, "Recovering the Reading of Renaissance Englishwomen: Deployments of Autobiography", *Critical Survey*, 12, no 2 (2000), 33-48.

The other relevant trend in studies of reading has been the tendency, particularly of scholars using mainly literary sources, to chart a narrative of a medieval communal model of reading giving way to an early modern model of private and silent reading. This is often linked to other narratives situating the birth of the 'self' and privacy in the Reformation and early modern period.<sup>5</sup> Silent reading is often attributed to the supposed private interiorised religiosity of Protestantism and particularly Puritanism. An example of this is Cecile Jagodzinski's work, which situates an emergent privacy in the seventeenth century and links it to reading practices and the Protestant Reformation. She writes 'as members of the major religious denominations came to reading as a substitute for, and central expression of, religious practice, it became apparent that this private reading had larger implications: private reading freed one from the community, from established religious authority - perhaps even from all authority' and 'Printed books (or rather, their increased accessibility) and the practice of devotional reading strengthened the inner life against the exigencies of law, persecution, and religious custom'.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the link made between early modern religious change and reading, relatively little attention has been paid to religious or devotional reading. Heidi Brayman Hackel acknowledges that sermons and handbooks of practical divinity are 'mere footnotes to our literary canon and yet must have taken up so much of the space in the bookshops of St. Pauls, in book pedlars' packs, and in private libraries'. Nevertheless, she explicitly excluded Bibles from her study.<sup>7</sup> Religious reading, particularly of the Bible, has long been recognised as one of the core activities of Protestantism. Yet the interplay of the reformations, religion, and reading has usually focussed on print and popular culture rather than on the practice of reading itself.

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<sup>5</sup> Cambers, *Godly Reading*, 27-33

<sup>6</sup> Jagodzinski, *Privacy and Print*, 20, 50

<sup>7</sup> Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material*, 14

A recent contribution to the field is Andrew Cambers' work on the place of reading in wider godly religious culture. For Cambers reading is the defining characteristic of godly religious practice, piety, and identity. He argues that the godly style of reading was typically oral, communal, and social; and that the godly consciously chose that style of reading as a means by which to socially construct the godly community and simultaneously set them apart from their non-godly neighbours. Cambers challenges assumptions about the interiority of puritan piety and grand claims about the connections between advanced Protestantism and emergent individualism and interiority in the mould of Jagodzinski.<sup>8</sup> In his selection of sources Cambers rather subsumes practices shared by Protestants across the religious spectrum into defining the behaviour of the godly. Religious reading, in style if not content, was a domestic religious practice that cut across the spectrum of religious belief.

It is an irony often observed by historians of reading that it leaves little material trace and they are usually reliant upon those who read 'with pen in hand' for evidence of reading practices. This inevitably skews their models of reading and excludes those unable or disinclined to write while reading. Writing was closely bound up with reading.<sup>9</sup> The historiography of reading and of writing has traditionally followed separate trajectories. However, recent work acknowledges the interwoven nature of reading and writing as well as the dependency we have on writing for evidence of reading. In a domestic religious context, it is even more challenging to approach any one practice as a distinct mode of behaviour. Religious reading and writing are closely interwoven into many of the practices of domestic religion, particularly prayer and meditation.

The focus of literary scholars has, until recently, been those authors published in print who contributed to the canon of seventeenth century literature. However, in the last thirty years,

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<sup>8</sup> Cambers, *Godly Reading*, 7-9

<sup>9</sup> Narveson, *Bible Readers and Lay Writers*

attention has increasingly turned to manuscript production and circulation, and to women's writing. The scholarship on seventeenth century women's writing is influenced by the desire to establish a canon of women writers and the traditional questions of authorship and aesthetics. Recent theoretical developments in the field, however, have stressed materiality of gendered writing, manuscript texts, collaborative texts, and most importantly 'women's writings on a diverse range of non-literary, domestic and religious subjects'.<sup>10</sup> Micheline White highlighted how early feminist critique of women's religious writing tended to downplay its cultural significance and overlook texts which did not appear to resist gender norms. Recent scholarship, however, places women's religious writing into its context and, in tandem with the new interest in domestic religion, recognises the degree to which women's religious works had 'important public implications even if they appeared to address domestic or private concerns'.<sup>11</sup>

Two scholars recently and simultaneously tackled the relationship between Bible reading and devotional writing. Femke Molekamp explored the diverse Bible-reading cultures that women engaged with and their connections to female writing.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile Kate Narveson examined devotional writing inspired by reading the Bible in the everyday lives of lay men and women. Both scholars emphasised the significance of Bible reading for the development of lay cultures of interpretive reading and devotional writing. Making notes while reading the Bible led to composing 'prayers and meditations, miniature homilies preached to themselves, doctrinal exercises, letters of admonition and encouragement, and accounts of passages in their lives'.<sup>13</sup> Reading, particularly in scripture, inspired and provided material for new devotional compositions: devotional poetry, prayers, meditations, and other forms as well as

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<sup>10</sup> Laura Lunger Knoppers, *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 6

<sup>11</sup> Micheline White, *English Women, Religion and Textual Production, 1500-1625*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 1-4

<sup>12</sup> Molekamp, *Women and the Bible in Early Modern England*, passim

<sup>13</sup> Narveson, *Bible Readers and Lay Writers*, 3-4

more intellectual religious writing. Many of these forms of textual production have been the subject of historical study and some have long historiographies. Much rarer is an approach which integrates all this textual production, with reading, into domestic religion. Narveson's work goes a long way towards this as it delves into the myriad purposes and readerships of devotional writing.

I argue that reading and writing occupied a central place in domestic religion. It was through reading and writing that many devotional practices were performed. Reading the Bible, and other devotional texts, was a religious duty but writing was no less implicated in faithful performance of domestic religion. Reading and writing were religious duties in and of themselves which connected the other practices of domestic religion with one another and with wider religious practices. Furthermore, I consider writing activities which may not be explicitly devotional in their content but nevertheless function as an expression of religious duty. Ryrie and Narveson, among others, argue for a broad based religious culture in which lay devotional writing was popular among the piously engaged at all parts of the denominational spectrum.<sup>14</sup> While I broadly agree, I also seek to account for the volume of devotional writing produced by the puritan or godly community. I argue that the impetus of self-examination inspired the written reflection on the pious self and the practices of domestic religion by which they judged themselves.

### **Early morning reading and writing**

Prescriptive authors typically began their descriptions of the ideal day of piety with individual prayer. However, this simple morning prayer was not performed in isolation. In *The Practise of Pietie*, Lewis Bayly advised beginning each day with God's word and prayer. Prayer should follow reading a chapter from the Bible 'forasmuch that as faith is the soule, so

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<sup>14</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 4-9; Narveson, *Bible Readers and Lay Writers*, 4

reading and meditating of the word of God, are the Parents of Praier'.<sup>15</sup> Bayly's programme of thrice daily reading a chapter would enable the Bible to be read over in a year. His method for meditating on the chapter was to note those things that confirm faith or increase repentance.<sup>16</sup> This would increase repentance for sins and demonstrate to God 'that thy minde is resolved through the assistance of his grace to amend thy faults'.<sup>17</sup> The importance of linking prayer and reading was visually inscribed on the frontispiece to Bayly's work (figure 1). A similar pattern was prescribed by Dorchester puritan John White who believed constant and daily study of the Bible was necessary to keep the word fresh in the memory. He prescribed daily reading of the scripture in the morning, at noon and in the evening, in addition to the reading of the word at extraordinary times.<sup>18</sup> He also linked prayer and reading of the word for although they be 'two distinct exercises, yet they mutually help one another, is most manifest, and consequently are fit to be joyned together.'<sup>19</sup>

Early in the century Lady Margaret Hoby reported almost every day that her day began with 'privat praier'. Hoby's prayer however was intimately connected to her reading and writing. Prayer and reading is often described in her diary as an integrated practice. For the 17 December 1600 Hoby notes 'after my praier and readinge I went into the feeldes with Mistress Thornborow'. More frequently, however, there is a linear relationship between the practices with prayer preceding reading. On 20 January 1600 Hoby recorded 'after private praier I reed a whill and then did eat my breakfast'. On 14 January 1601 Hoby wrote 'after praier and reading I went to worke' while the next day she 'went to readinge and worke' after

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<sup>15</sup> Bayly, *The Practise of Pietie*, 300, 310-11

<sup>16</sup> Bayly, *The Practise of Pietie*, 313-315

<sup>17</sup> Bayly, *The Practise of Pietie*, 319

<sup>18</sup> John White, *A vway to the tree of life discovered in sundry directions for the profitable reading of the Scriptvres : wherein is described occasionally the nature of a spirituall man, and, in A digression, the morality and perpetuity of the Fourth Commandment in every circumstance thereof, is discovered and cleared*, (London: Printed by M.F. for R. Royston, 1647), 342

<sup>19</sup> White, *A vway to the tree of life*, 127



prayer.<sup>20</sup> This reflects a flexibility in how Hoby constructed and understood her daily devotions. On some days Hoby's morning private prayer and reading is interspersed with her breakfast and giving her household orders for the day. On 17 January 1600 Hoby 'tooke order for dinner' between personal prayer and Bible reading while 22 February 1600 is just one example of breaking her fast before continuing with her morning devotions.<sup>21</sup> Hoby's diary makes clear the strong association between early morning prayer and reading but also reminds us that real lives and domestic practices were fluid and adaptable to daily circumstances.

The later seventeenth century diary of Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick, also shows the strong association between personal prayer and reading in early morning devotion. Rich ordinarily started her day with reading and meditation in preparation for prayer. Occasionally reading preceded meditation, but either or both practices always preceded prayer. A pair of entries in September 1666 demonstrate this flexibility. On 16 September Rich went straight to her closet 'and read and prayed'. Four days later meanwhile she first went outside to meditate and 'then, when ready went into my closet, read and prayed'. The frequency with which these three practices – meditation, reading, and prayer – are mentioned in conjunction in Rich's diary reveal them to be constituent parts of one performance. Rich wrote about ideal morning devotions in a letter to George, Lord Berkeley, giving him 'rules for holy living'. She encouraged him to rise early, believing morning was the best time for the service of God, and begin his private devotions with reading the word of God in the scriptures before meditation and prayer.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 135

<sup>21</sup> *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 53, 63

<sup>22</sup> Lady Mary Rich, "Rules for a Holy Life: in a Letter Written to the Right Honourable George, Earl of Berkeley", in *Memoir of Lady Warwick*, ed. Walker, 272-4

The most common material for morning devotional reading was the Bible. Historian Andrew Cambers describes Lady Margaret Hoby's morning reading as 'exclusively scriptural' assuming that, on the many occasions when she simply notes 'after privat praier I did read', this was also scriptural.<sup>23</sup> It is likely that the Bible was Hoby's typical morning fare, but not necessarily exclusively so. Lady Mary Rich's morning reading was also usually scriptural. A typical diary entry reads 'In the morning, as soon as ready, I went into the wilderness to meditate; and then, when I had read in the word, I went to private prayer.'<sup>24</sup> Rich shares the specific places she read in her Bible in other diary entries, for example on the morning of 22 September she went to her closet and read chapters from the Bible on 'the institution of the Lord's supper and of the sufferings of Christ' before meditating upon them.<sup>25</sup> How might Hoby, Rich, and others perform their Bible reading?

Post-Reformation, Bible readership expanded significantly, leading to clerical anxiety about what this new constituency for the Bible might do with their reading. A cottage industry devoted to manuals on how to read the scriptures correctly responded.<sup>26</sup> General guides to holy living also included advice on how to read the Bible. Nicholas Byfield was inspired to publish his guide by the many friends who asked him for advice and the belief that 'in the most places the godly that are unlearned, are at a great want of a settled course herein'.<sup>27</sup> Herein lies the tension; a genuine desire to increase levels of participation in Bible reading yet concern to control that reading and its outcomes. Byfield's book was largely devoted to a calendar designed so the whole of the Bible was read over the course of a year with, typically, three consecutive chapters per day. Byfield provided analytical tables of each book

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<sup>23</sup> Cambers, *Godly Reading*, 51; *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 67, 19 March 1600

<sup>24</sup> *Diary of Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick*, 80-1, 9 September 1666

<sup>25</sup> *Diary of Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick*, 83, 22 September 1666

<sup>26</sup> Narveson, *Bible Readers and Lay Writers*, 23

<sup>27</sup> Nicholas Byfield, *Directions for the private reading of the Scriptures wherein besides the number of the chapters assigned to every day, the order and drift of the whole Scripture is methodically set down, and choice rules (that shew how to read with profit) are likewise given, the use whereof is shewed in the preface*, (London: Printed by E. Griffin for N. Butter, 1618), preface

of the Bible summarising the contents for ease of comprehension and memory.<sup>28</sup> The preface outlined Byfield's rules for observing profitable things in the Bible. Readers should observe those places in scripture that comfort them, reprove their faults, provide rules and guidance and 'containe evident ground of truth' to settle conscience and give assurance in the will of God. Byfield recommended recording these places in a portable 'little paper book' under headings and writing out in full the choicest places each quarter. This practice was helpful to support reading and rereading notes could be of profit in future distress or confusion.<sup>29</sup> Byfield recommended a devotional, meditative, in-course and cyclical Bible reading, yet it was also goal-oriented with pen in hand. The recording of profitable places produced a new text guiding future readings of scripture, mediating between the individual and the scriptural text according to their needs.

As the century progressed, anxiety over unlearned access to the Bible intensified. John White published his advice at a time when radical groups, such as the familists, early Quakers, and Ranters, were rejecting Bible reading and denying the literal and absolute truth of the Bible.<sup>30</sup> White came into conflict with radicals in Dorchester in the late 1640s and his tract was a warning against radical heresy.<sup>31</sup> He wrote in the dedicatory epistle 'because it hath pleased the Lord to cast us into dangerous times, wherein some men endeavour, what they can, to bring the scriptures into contempt, crying down the sacred booke, as containing nothing else but a dead letter, and being a beggerly element, fit for none but the lowest forme of Christians'. It was believed that the sects particularly attracted the less literate hence White felt directions for profitable Bible reading were the best way to protect his congregation.

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<sup>28</sup> Byfield, *Directions for the private reading*, preface

<sup>29</sup> Byfield, *Directions for the private reading*, preface

<sup>30</sup> Cambers, *Godly Reading*, 16-18

<sup>31</sup> Rory T. Cornish, "White, John (1575–1648)", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, accessed 28 Nov 2012, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29255>

Unsurprisingly, White took a more prescriptive line than Byfield had done thirty three years earlier.

White's programme was a discontinuous reading of the Bible, with Old and New Testament chapters prescribed for the same day. It was also discontinuous in that White felt the Bible should be read comparatively: internally, through consulting translations, examining the surrounding text, and comparing places within the scriptures and externally, consulting ministers and other godly men through their writings and in person through private conferences. Rather than an isolated monolithic text dominating early morning reading, the Bible was the key text at the centre of an inter-textual, comparative reading process.<sup>32</sup> This was also reading for action. Reading in the Bible should be followed by mediation.<sup>33</sup> Daily reading should inspire self-examination: 'call ourselves to daily account, how our practice answers the rules that are from time to time set before us in reading or hearing the word'.<sup>34</sup> At the same time reading itself is the key practice at the centre of a complex interrelated set of practices: meditation, prayer, and self-examination.

Why then has the historiography been generally uninterested in devotional reading? Why has so much distinction been drawn between the devotional cyclical in-course reading of the Bible and the goal-oriented model?<sup>35</sup> Julie Crawford argued that it relates to the association between devotional reading and women's reading and the assumption that women's spiritual reading was designed to inscribe them within the domestic sphere and could not therefore be

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<sup>32</sup> For debate on this conclusion see: Peter Stallybrass, "Books and scrolls: navigating the Bible", in *Books and Readers in Early Modern England: Material Studies*, ed. Jennifer Andersen and Elizabeth Sauer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 42-79; W. R. Owens, "Modes of Bible Reading in Early Modern England", *The History of Reading, Volume I*, ed. Shafquat Towheed and W.R. Owens (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011), 32-45.

<sup>33</sup> White, *A vway to the tree of life*, 151

<sup>34</sup> White, *A vway to the tree of life*, 158-9

<sup>35</sup> Cambers, *Godly Reading*, 77

'contestatory nor goal-oriented'.<sup>36</sup> While both examples of lived experience drawn on in this chapter are women, it was not a feminine style of piety. Male examples such as Nehemiah Wallington or John Bruen could have been deployed, however, Hoby and Rich have been preferred for their rich sources which extend over several years. The neglect also stems from a fundamental misunderstanding of Bible reading as a devotional duty of value in and of itself. The value of Bible reading lay in what the reader took away from the practice. Byfield and White encode this value into the process of reading the Bible. Each cycle saw the reader marking places which spoke to them in their current condition as a Christian and in their station in life. Each separate reading might have a different, however subtle, purpose or goal.

How do our snippets of evidence for practice reflect this prescriptive advice? Lady Margaret Hoby was well acquainted with Nicholas Byfield, and Byfield's son dedicated another of his father's posthumous works to Sir Thomas and Lady Margaret.<sup>37</sup> Perhaps the Hobys were two of the friends who had urged Byfield to publish his *Directions for the Reading of the Scripture*.<sup>38</sup> We cannot know but we can explore Lady Hoby's diary for evidence about how she read her Bible. Andrew Cambers argued that the close connection between Hoby's early morning private prayer and reading suggest that, like vocal and emotional 'private prayer', this reading may not have been silent.<sup>39</sup> We may suppose that when Hoby joined with her chaplain Richard Rhodes in morning prayer and reading it would have an oral and aural experience. For instance, after prayer on 1 October 1599, she embroidered while listening to Rhodes read.<sup>40</sup> The defining characteristic of Hoby's morning reading was her habit of making notes in her Bible. Just two examples are 31 August 1599 when she wrote in her

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<sup>36</sup> Julie Crawford, "Reconsidering Early Modern Women's Reading, or, How Margaret Hoby Read Her de Momay", *Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, 73, no 2, (2010): 205-6

<sup>37</sup> Nicholas Byfield, *The rule of faith, or, An exposition of the Apostles Creed so handled as it affordeth both milke for babes, and strong meat for such as are at full age / by ... Nicholas Bifield ; ... now published ... by his sonne, Adoniram Bifield*, (London: Printed by G.M. for Philemon Stephens and Christopher Meredith, 1626), dedicatory epistle

<sup>38</sup> Byfield, *Directions for the private reading of the Scriptures*, preface

<sup>39</sup> Cambers, *Godly Reading*, 52

<sup>40</sup> *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 24

diary 'after privat praiers I wrett notes in my testament' and the 7 September 1601 entry 'I writt, after privatt praers in my Bible'.<sup>41</sup>

Lady Mary Rich's Bible reading was affective and often inspired her to perform an emotional meditation. On 2 February 1667 upon reading Isaiah 49.15 'god was please exceedingly to move my heart and to make store of tears run down my eyes at the consideration of that gracious promise'. She meditated on God's promise not to forget his children and, with sighs and tears, begged to be numbered among the elect.<sup>42</sup> Later that month Rich's morning reading of 'thou art my portion, O lord' inspired her to converse with God for more than two hours. Daniel was favourite with Rich, and in July 1668 she was humbled by reading Daniel's accusation to Belshazzar that he had not glorified God believing that the accusation could be applied to her. In response she poured out her soul before God for a full hour and 'did exceedingly melt my heart and made me weep much'.<sup>43</sup> On occasion her morning Bible reading inspired even greater heights of emotion; a passage she read in January 1671 stimulated Rich to confess the sins of the nation and with sighs, groans, and tears; the sins of her family and husband.<sup>44</sup> She made a specific note when her reading had been particularly affective, perhaps as a reminder for the future. Occasionally, she hints that her morning exercises had been uninspiring. One such example from 3 March 1670 reads 'After I had done meditating, which I did for about two hours, I read and prayer, but with dulness'. This chimes with historian Femke Molekamp's conclusion that Rich 'privileges the affective function' of reading and accords with John White's prescriptions on reading the Bible to warm the heart and 'quicken our affections'.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 12; 163

<sup>42</sup> *Diary of Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick*, 100-1, (2 February 1667)

<sup>43</sup> *Diary of Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick*, 162, (26 July 1668)

<sup>44</sup> *Diary of Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick*, 229, (23 Jan 1671)

<sup>45</sup> Femke Molekamp, "Early Modern Women and Affective Devotional Reading", *European Review of History*, 17, no 1, (2010): 53-75, 56; White, *A vway to the tree of life*, 151. On the practice of Bible reading as revealed through marks and material considerations see also: Femke Molekamp, "'Of the Incomparable treasure of the

The Bible was not the only choice of material for morning reading. Occasionally Lady Margaret Hoby recorded making notes in her sermon book rather than her Bible after private prayer. If we assume that making notes in her Bible was a pen-in-hand reading of that text, then it follows that Hoby regularly chose her sermon book for her early morning reading. On 1 September 1599, following morning prayer, Rhodes read to Hoby from George Gifford's *Sermons upon the Songe of Salomon* (1598).<sup>46</sup> Lady Mary Rich, meanwhile, regularly turned to sermons and practical divinity for early morning reading. Richard Baxter was a favourite author; on 12 December 1666 Rich rose, dressed, and went to her closet to read his 'Of being Crucified to the World by the Cross of Christ'. Rich read this non-scriptural text in the same affective manner as she read her Bible. While reading Baxter's book 'God was pleased...much to move my heart and to make me shed many tears, after I had done reading i meditated upon what i had read and God was pleased to affect my heart much by this passage'<sup>47</sup> Lady Rich was similarly affected by her morning reading of Seth Ward, Bishop of Exeter's sermon preached in the Lord's on the fast-day for the burning of London.<sup>48</sup> Rich also turned to her own writing for morning reading. On 1 November 1667, she revealed in her diary 'In the morning, as soon as up, I retired and read in the Bible; then read some occasional meditations of my own'.<sup>49</sup>

### Reading and writing during the day

A great deal of religious reading and writing performed in the household was not tied to a particular time of day. While her early morning practice of prayer and reading was constant,

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Holy Scripture': The Geneva Bible in the Early Modern Household" in *Literature and Popular Culture in Early Modern England*, ed. Matthew Dimmock and Andrew Hadfield (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), 121-37.

<sup>46</sup> *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 13

<sup>47</sup> Quoted in: Cambers, *Godly Reading*, 50

<sup>48</sup> Seth Ward was a mathematics lecturer at Oxford from 1643 and refused to take the covenant and engagement. He became chaplain to Ralph Brownrig in 1656. After the restoration, he became Bishop of Exeter in 1662. While his religious beliefs are not known, his strength lay in ecclesiastical administration, he gained a reputation as a prosecutor of dissenters. John Henry, "Ward, Seth (1617–1689)" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, May 2006, accessed 4 March 2013, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28706>

<sup>49</sup> *Diary of Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick*, 133, 1 November 1667

Lady Margaret Hoby's diary demonstrates the variety of reading and writing practices during the rest of the day. On 23 January 1600 Hoby spent the morning before dinner writing in her sermon book and reading in the Bible. Between dinner and 4 in the afternoon she wrote and 'wrought'. The following day Hoby heard her chaplain, Mr Rhodes, read after dinner and, after sitting with her husband and going to prayer and self-examination, read her testament before supper. A few days later Hoby listened to her husband read from Perkins in the afternoon.<sup>50</sup> A close reading of the diary reveals the centrality of reading and writing to her daily religious routine but also the wide variety in that daily practice. The fragmentary nature of the archival evidence for reading and writing practices means that the specific time and place is often tantalisingly out of reach.

In addition to published texts there was a great variety of manuscript material consumed and composed as part of domestic practice. One of the characteristics of the Harley and Gell archives is the sheer volume of miscellaneous notes on religious topics. Sometimes these can be identified as sermon notes, meditations, commonplace books, or notes on works of religious controversy or edification. At other times, it is extremely difficult to discern how, why, or where from the notes were produced. An example is a set of notes on 1 Corinthians 11.28 in the Gell manuscripts, probably in the hand of Sir John Gell the elder. These notes may have been a religious exercise exploring the scriptural phrase, a meditation upon the scripture, or a sermon reconstructed from sermon notes. The phrase selected 'But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup' speaks to the practice of self-examination before receiving the Lord's Supper.<sup>51</sup> The uncertainty of provenance of this manuscript is matched by the virtually illegible miscellaneous manuscripts in the Harley archives. Some are untitled and while some of the text can be read, their source or intent is difficult to identify. The subjects include notes on the Eucharist, idolatry, the nature of God,

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<sup>50</sup> *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 55-6

<sup>51</sup> Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, Gell of Hopton Hall, D258/7/13/6 (viii)



the law of religion, the true church, the authority of the church in ceremonies, and set forms of prayer.<sup>52</sup>

The variety of reading and writing practices performed as part of domestic religion defies easy characterisation and organisation. Inevitably there is much crossover of theme and genre. I have grouped the reading and writing practices into four groups: sermon notes, religious study, devotional, and life-literature.

### **Sermon notes**

Sermon notes and fair copies can be identified in the Gell and Harley archives. Sir Edward Harley's sermon notes dating from the later seventeenth century feature dates and scripture references.<sup>53</sup> Yet others mention the name of the preacher as well, for example a set from July 1674 on the text 'charity thinketh no evil' preached by a Dr Glanville.<sup>54</sup> In the Gell archive one set of notes is separated at intervals with 'Burg 6th Sermon' and similar, which might refer to a particular preacher, place, or month.<sup>55</sup> There are masses of sermon notebooks in the Gell archive covered in Sir John Gell's scrawled writing and separated at intervals with dates, names, and scriptural references (Figure 8).<sup>56</sup> The presence of both sermon notes made while listening to sermons and fleshed out fair copies suggests that translating rough sermon notes into readable, usable copies was part of Gell's domestic religious practice. This practice can also be seen in Lady Margaret Hoby's daily routine. On Monday 13 August 1599 at four in the afternoon she 'wrett out the sarmon into my book preached the day before'.<sup>57</sup> Lady Hoby regularly reported this sort of activity on Monday morning or afternoon. In late August 1599, she reported that she was behind and so wrote out a sermon in the morning and 'wrett out

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<sup>52</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70089, Misc.93

<sup>53</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70089, Misc.93

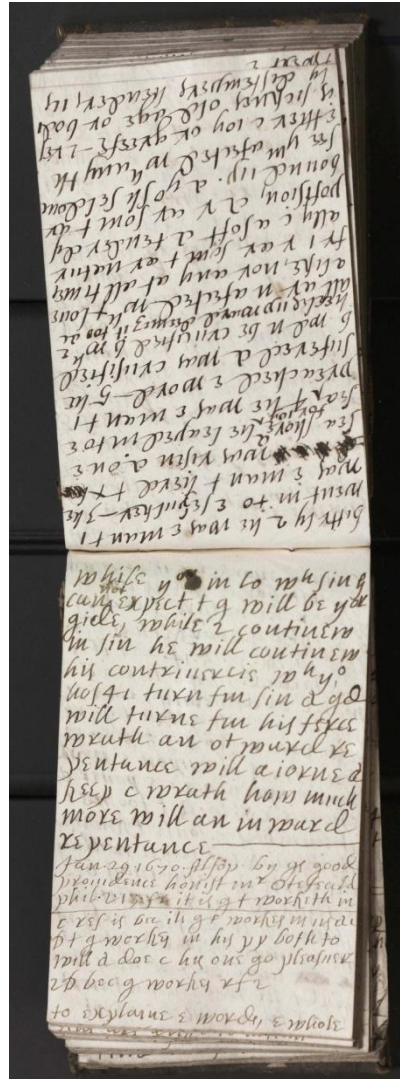
<sup>54</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70062, Dr Glanville at Bath July 1674 upon the text charity thinketh no evil

<sup>55</sup> Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, Gell of Hopton Hall, D258/7/13/6 (v)

<sup>56</sup> Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, Gell of Hopton Hall, D3287/24/5

<sup>57</sup> *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 4

another sermon in my book' in the afternoon.<sup>58</sup> Sermon note taking and writing out fair copies was likely a widespread practice, and was linked to the communal practice of sermon repetition discussed in the previous chapter.



**Figure 8: One of Sir John Gell's Sermon Notebooks. Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, Gell of Hampton Hall, D3287/24/5/2**

Multiple acts of reading and writing took the message of a sermon from pulpit performance to home performance. Writing was the key practice linking public, personal, and house hold religion; and the sermon notes the means by which public practice is translated into the domestic setting. The sermon goer made notes during a sermon, took them home where they

<sup>58</sup> *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 10-11

were read, copied out fair, and read again, in both personal and communal devotion, all as part of domestic religious practice. The rough and fair notes could also serve as a source for sermon repetition in the home. The communal practices are linked by personal practices and facilitated through reading and writing.

### **Religious study**

An enigmatic Gell manuscript appears to be a combination of sermon note book and commonplace book.<sup>59</sup> Bound with cloth the booklet contains both neatly written notes, roughly written sermon notes, and headed pages with collections of page references, quotes, Bible references, and notes. The headings of the commonplace book style pages include 'predestination', 'communicants duties', and 'playes and books'. Commonplacing (gathering extracts and quotes under a variety of headings) was recommended by Nicholas Byfield and John White in their prescriptions for reading the Bible. The product of that activity, commonplace books, have a long historiography.<sup>60</sup> For historians of reading, commonplace books offer a key arena in which to explore ideas of authorship, genre, and the relationship between print and manuscript.

Domestic religious reading was supposed to be productive and the commonplace book provided a mechanism for the reader to digest and make their reading profitable. As scholar Ann Moss noted 'commonplace books make the assumption that the reader is a potential writer and propose themselves as mediators between the old texts they harvest and the new texts they hold as germ'.<sup>61</sup> Commonplace books were produced for many reasons but the religious or theological commonplace book was part of domestic religion. Lady Brilliana Harley kept a theological commonplace book before her marriage in 1623. It was focussed on

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<sup>59</sup> Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, Gell of Hopton Hall, D258/36/35/1

<sup>60</sup> Which has been traced effectively by Heidi Brayman Hackel and Adam Smyth. Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material*, 143-149; Adam Smyth, *Autobiography in Early Modern England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 123-129

<sup>61</sup> Quoted in: Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material*, 143

the piety of the individual and the religious behaviour of the elect. The commonplace book helped her organise her reading which ranged over the Bible, Calvin, Perkins, and sermons of local ministers; but also the classical moral philosophy of Seneca.<sup>62</sup>

Practical divinity was a popular topic of domestic religious study. There are copious notes in the Gell archive concerning matters of practical divinity such as those headed 'that assurance is attainable'.<sup>63</sup> Sir John Gell wrote about church reform penning a series of notes 'touching a preaching ministry', 'Touching the abuse of excommunication', and 'Touching non residents and pluralities'; and a separate set of notes 'resolving those questions which are now most in agitation, not onely in the church of England but in many forreign churches also popish and reformed'.<sup>64</sup> One set of notes entitled 'Leigh annotations' appear to be extracts from Edward Leigh's 1650 publication *Annotations upon all the New Testament*.<sup>65</sup> These notes have been underlined in various places suggesting later rereading.<sup>66</sup> In the Harley archive one set of notes is entitled 'Sunday a Sabbath' which could refer to John Ley's *Sunday a Sabbath, or, A preparative discourse for discussion of sabbatary doubts* published in 1641.<sup>67</sup> Sir Robert was known as a sabbatarian having supported a 1628 parliamentary bill to reform abuses of the Sabbath. Sir Edward Harley followed the family doctrine and composed his own set of notes on the sanctification of the sabbath.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads*, 49; Johanna Harris, "'But I thinke and beleeeve': Lady Brilliana Harley's Puritanism in Epistolary Community" in *The Intellectual Culture of Puritan Women, 1558–1680*, ed. Johanna Harris and Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 114–5

<sup>63</sup> Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, Gell of Hopton Hall, D258/7/13/6 (iii)

<sup>64</sup> Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, Gell of Hopton Hall, D258/36/34/1

<sup>65</sup> Edward Leigh, *Annotations upon all the New Testament philologicall and theologicall wherein the emphasis and elegancie of the Greeke is observed, some imperfections in our translation are discovered, divers Jewish rites and customes tending to illustrate the text are mentioned, many antilogies and seeming contradictions reconciled, severall darke and obscure places opened, sundry passages vindicated from the false glosses of papists and hereticks*, (London: Printed by W.W. and E. G. for William Lee, 1650)

<sup>66</sup> Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, Gell of Hopton Hall, D258/10/20/2

<sup>67</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70062, Misc. 81

<sup>68</sup> Cliffe, *The Puritan Gentry Besieged*, 139

Lady Brilliana's religious study is revealed in correspondence with her son Edward. Brilliana wrote discussing a book about the prohibition of the Scottish Book of Common Prayer. She had not been able to get hold of it to send to him but had heard it read.<sup>69</sup> On another occasion she sent a Scottish sermon with a warning that he should be careful who sees him with it; it was apparently controversial as Brilliana writes 'you never read such a peace'.<sup>70</sup> On 1 February 1639 Brilliana sent him a 'littell booke' which she shared out of a desire that he benefit from it for 'it pleases me better then any thinge i have reade a long time'.<sup>71</sup> Edward is instructed to read, weight it up for himself, and let her know how he likes it. Books travelled in the other direction as well. On 30 November Brilliana thanked her son for sending 'the Man in the Moune' and asked him to send 'the French booke' that he had discussed in his previous letter.<sup>72</sup> They did not restrict their reading to books from within the Calvinist tradition. In one letter Brilliana mentions obtaining 'The Holy Court'; this book, published by the French Jesuit Nicolas Caussin in 1638, gave advice on how to control the passions.<sup>73</sup> At this time, the book was only available in French which was Brilliana's preferred language to read in. Johanna Harris described Brilliana's intellectualism and Puritanism as 'centred on the principle of community'.<sup>74</sup> Her reading was designed to benefit to those around her; and she mediated that benefit by discussing her reading in her letters.

The purpose of domestic religious study was, according to Cambers, to 'channel the Holy Spirit, to be spiritually transformed by an intellectual experience'.<sup>75</sup> Lewis Bayly asserted that 'unless that a man doth truely know God hee neyther can, nor will worship him aright: for, how can a man love him, whom hee knoweth not?' Bayly dedicated the first seventy-five

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<sup>69</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter XIII, 11, (24 November 1638)

<sup>70</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter, XLI, 55 (20 May 1639)

<sup>71</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter xxii, 27 (1 February 1639)

<sup>72</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter XIV, 13 (30 November 1638); The former was Francis Godwin's *Man in the Moon* published in 1638.

<sup>73</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter xxii, 27, (1 February 1639)

<sup>74</sup> Harris, "But I thinke and beleeeve", 115-117

<sup>75</sup> Cambers, "Readers Marks and Religious Practice", 218

pages of *The Practise of Pietie* to knowledge of God and a further two hundred pages to the miseries of the unreconciled man, the blessings of the reconciled man, and the hinderances to the practice of piety.<sup>76</sup> Although the illiterate could learn about God and their faith through intermediaries, commentators of the time felt that they were missing an essential part of the Protestant experience. Ryrie pointed out that the 'intellectualism of early Protestantism is hard to overestimate'.<sup>77</sup> Yet this was not knowledge for knowledge's sake. There was a focus on faith combined with knowledge. Religious study was an act of devotion not simply intellectual exercise.

For a few, religious study might be part of an effort to engage in public debate on religious matters. It was not only clerics who published on religious topics. In 1645, Sir Simonds D'Ewes published *The primitive practise for preserving the truth*, a treatise condemning the persecution of tender consciences and drawing on the positive example of the ancient and 'best reformed' churches. While it is likely that D'Ewes always intended to publish, he claimed that he composed the work as part of personal devotion in anticipation of suffering persecution.<sup>78</sup> Sir Edward Harley produced reams of manuscript notes and drafts while composing two works defending his ecclesiological and theological positions. One was a treatise promoting comprehension in the Church of England; the redrawing of the boundaries of the national church to encompass moderate non-conformists.<sup>79</sup> This once again highlights the permeability of the boundary between domestic practice and public religion. The goal of

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<sup>76</sup> Bayly, *The Practise of Pietie*, 3

<sup>77</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 261

<sup>78</sup> Simonds D'Ewes, *The primitive practise for preserving the truth, or, An historicall narration, shewing what course the primitive church anciently, and the best reformed churches since have taken to suppress heresie and schisme and occasionally also by way of opposition discovering the papall and prelaticall courses to destroy and roote out the same truth, and the judgements of God which have ensued upon persecuting princes and prelates*, (London: Printed by M.S. for Henry Overton, 1645), preface

<sup>79</sup> Edward Harley, *An humble essay toward the settlement of peace and truth in the church, as a certain foundation of lasting union*, (London: Printed for N. Simmons and T. Simmons, 1681); Edward Harley, *A Scriptural and rational account of the Christian religion particularly concerning justification only by the propitiation and redemption of the Lord Jesus Christ*, (London: Printed for Jonas Lundey, 1695)

Harley's and D'Ewes' personal religious study was to benefit the godly community through publication.

### **Devotional reading and writing**

The distinction between religious study and devotion is blurred. Genres such as practical divinity, sermons, and treatises were read devotionally as well as in study. Devotional reading and writing also encompassed prayers, poetry, and meditations. Scholar Victoria E. Burke recently explored the devotional writings of three seventeenth century women and their output demonstrates the diversity of devotional reading and writing. Elizabeth Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon's writings included prayers, scriptural extracts, and short meditations. Lady Anne Halkett favoured meditations but also wrote prayers and mother's advice. Alatheia Bethell's manuscripts were of religious verse and devotional prose.<sup>80</sup>

The psalms were key inspiration and justification for the composition of devotional poetry in the seventeenth century.<sup>81</sup> The Psalter appealed to Protestants as it provided the language through which the individual's spiritual relationship with God could be articulated and served as a model for prayers.<sup>82</sup> Hannibal Hamlin has identified the penitential psalms as particularly suitable for domestic devotional purposes.<sup>83</sup> Compositions drawing on the psalms have drawn the attention of literary scholars and propelled writers like Anne Vaughan Locke and Mary Sidney into the literary cannon. Devotional poetry did not end at metrical psalm versions as

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<sup>80</sup> Victoria E. Burke, "'My Poor Returns': Devotional Manuscripts by Seventeenth-Century Women", *Parergon*, 29, no 2, (2012): 47–68, 48. Burke's argument is based around the techniques each writer used to present their roles as authors. She argues that all three women constructed themselves as authors through their reading of the Bible and other devotional texts.

<sup>81</sup> Helen Wilcox, "Lyric Poetry" in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*, ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 209

<sup>82</sup> Danielle Clarke, "The Countess of Pembroke and the Practice of Piety" in *The Intellectual Culture of Puritan Women, 1558–1680*, ed. Johanna Harris and Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 31

<sup>83</sup> Hannibal Hamlin, "Sobs for Sorrowful Souls: Versions of the Penitential Psalms for Lay Devotion" in *Private and Domestic Devotion in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Jessica Martin and Alec Ryrie, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 211–35, 211, 215

the poetry of Aemilia Lanyer, Anne Bradstreet, and Lucy Hutchinson makes clear.<sup>84</sup> The search for female early modern writers has brought such poets to renown so it is worth remembering that the original context of composition was domestic and devotional. Danielle Clarke has argued that the production of the Sidney Psalter was intimately connected with the Countess of Pembroke's practice of piety. Her habits of 'restatement, repetition and variation' and her immersion in her key sources reflected meditative reading of the Bible, note making, and consultation of authorities; which were recommended for women and seen in practice.<sup>85</sup>

Members of the Harley and Gell families utilised their reading in their own forms of written devotion. Sir Robert Harley translated a prayer by St Thomas Aquinas to which he added a high Calvinist gloss.<sup>86</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter meditation was another popular domestic religious practice with both families that was intimately bound up with pious reading and writing. Meditation was inter-textual: it could be inspired by reading, might be on a written text, and could be performed through composing a written text.

According to Marie-Louise Coolahan, meditation manuals emphasised example, rather than rule, and this encouraged readers to write down their own meditations.<sup>87</sup> Consequently meditations are also a form for analysis by literary scholars. According to Raymond Anselment men's meditations focused on moral and spiritual discourse, and disdained the autobiographical; while women's meditations had 'little weighty discourse' and instead spiritualised the detail of daily life, making them inseparable from the self-fashioning of feminine autobiographical writing.<sup>88</sup> Coolahan, meanwhile, drew attention to the links

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<sup>84</sup> Susanne Woods, "Narrative Poetry" in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*, ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 222-234; Erica Longfellow, *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)

<sup>85</sup> Clarke, "The Countess of Pembroke", 32-6

<sup>86</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70001, f.44

<sup>87</sup> M-L Coolahan, "Redeeming parcels of time: Aesthetics and practice of occasional meditation", *The Seventeenth Century*, 22, no 1, (2007): 124-143, 128

<sup>88</sup> Raymond A. Anselment, "Feminine Self-reflection and the Seventeenth-Century Occasional Meditation", *The Seventeenth Century*, 26, no 1 (2011), 71



between feminine occasional meditations and spiritual journals; citing spiritual journals as the most common context for written occasional meditations. Occasional meditations constituted 'a measure of the spiritual life... inserted and incorporated into a continuous narrative of the spiritual life'.<sup>89</sup> The meditative practices of the Harleys and Gells call into question this distinction between feminine and masculine meditative styles.

Written meditations on biblical phrases, such as those by Elizabeth Gell on Philippians 2:27, cross the false distinction I've drawn between study and devotion.<sup>90</sup> An intellectual exercise deploying Elizabeth's scriptural reading throughout, it was devotional in that it dealt with sickness and with God's mercy to the sick person and their relations in their recovery. The manuscript concludes with a versification of psalm 103 on God's mercies and accompanying metrical tune. The manuscript is undated but perhaps it is Elizabeth's devotions on the occasion of a sickness, and recovery, of a loved one. It's an intriguing possibility that Elizabeth may have composed these devotions to benefit more than just herself. The conclusion to the meditation goes [my italics] 'This may serve by way of Direction or counsell & may these things take such impressions & produce such effects, through the blessing that teacheth to profit *that wee of our Relations may keep together an eternall day of rejoicing* in the kingdome of glory.' Perhaps these written devotions were circulated among the family or even used on a day of communal thanksgiving.

Lady Mary Rich habitually wrote out her occasional meditations. Anthony Walker described her practice: 'like a spiritual Bee she would suck Honey from all occurrences, whole Volumes of which she hath left behind'.<sup>91</sup> Writing these meditations deepened the contemplation of the subject and fixed it in the mind, and the written text provided material for future meditation and devotion. Rich re-read her meditations regularly. On 13 December 1666, Rich spent most

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<sup>89</sup> Coolahan, "Redeeming parcels of time", 131

<sup>90</sup> Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, Gell of Hopton Hall, D258/41/2

<sup>91</sup> Walker, *Memoir of Lady Warwick*, 29

of the afternoon in her closet 'reading some papers of occasional meditations, and scripture reflections made by myself. When revisiting her meditation 'Upon the Drawing of the Window-Curtains to Prevent the Sun's putting out the fire' Rich was so affected she wrote 'God was pleased much to move my heart with the subject of it'.<sup>92</sup> By recording her meditation, Rich was able to benefit from it many times over. Rich was recognised in her own lifetime for her meditative prowess. In his funeral sermon, Anthony Walker described meditation as her 'Master-piece' and she was sought out by George, Lord Berkeley, for her advice on holy living in which meditation featured prominently.<sup>93</sup> Rich's Chaplain, Anthony Walker, published a selection of her occasional and scriptural meditations with her funeral sermon from a much larger group of 182 manuscript meditations preserved in the British library.<sup>94</sup> Many more people were thereby able to benefit from Rich's meditations. So, while Rich drew heavily on domestic happenstance, her meditations had a life beyond her own domestic devotion.

Meanwhile, Sir Edward Harley's written meditations had much in common with a spiritual journal or autobiography. The Harley papers preserve numerous examples of meditations that Sir Edward composed each year on his birthday, 21 October. This was an annual practice in Sir Edward's domestic devotional routine. He began each with abstract meditation on salvation and the mercy of God then narrowed the scope to recall afflictions and deliverance from each affliction to the family over the last year.<sup>95</sup> Although described as meditations these documents could also be called life writing or annual diaries.

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<sup>92</sup> *Diary of Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick*, 93 (13 December 1666), 133 (28 October 1667)

<sup>93</sup> Lady Mary Rich "Rules for a Holy Life" in *Memoir of Lady Warwick*, 279

<sup>94</sup> Marie-Louise Coolahan discusses the posthumously printed meditations in footnote to her article "Redeeming parcels of time", n44, 140. In printing the meditations Walker substantially revised them, streamlining the text, cutting phrases and sentences, replacing words and correcting grammar. This is another example of clerical authors of life-writing shaping and moulding the practice of lay people for prescriptive purposes.

<sup>95</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70062, Birthday Meditations at Bramton Castle October 21 1695, Birthday Meditations at Bramton Castle October 21 1696

## Life-writing

As seen in the previous chapter, self-examination was a key aspect of puritan piety and domestic religion. Self-examination involved recognising the signs of election to salvation in one's own soul and gaining assurance of that election. The practice was intimately bound up with reading and writing practices. A few prescriptive authors suggested writing down sins and blessings as grounds of assurance. Richard Rogers recommended 'set downe many parts of his life in writing also, such as are principally to be kept in record (as Gods benefits, and his owne sinnes) as he is able, and all to helpe him to be better directed in it.' This call fell on fertile ground; with many seventeenth century godly recording these signs in their lives. Much of the value of this practice lay in the ability to reread this written record to confirm or reassure oneself of one's salvation. This written record, however, took a variety of fluid forms and could involve a multiplicity of domestic religious practices. In recent years, scholars have referred to this corpus of textual production as life-writing; recognising the common inspiration, motivation, and themes of forms such as diaries, autobiographies, and even less obvious forms such as commonplace books, almanacs, and meditations.<sup>96</sup> Through these various forms of writing the providences of God in one's life could be recognised. Kate Narveson stressed the possibilities that devotional writing offered early modern people to work through and share their own narratives of self.<sup>97</sup> These forms are not unique to Puritans, however, there is a concentration of surviving examples at the godly end of the religious spectrum. I would argue that the impetus to self-examination from predestinarian theology promoted the production of life-writing as it encouraged a personal reflection on one's spiritual state and devotional behaviour.

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<sup>96</sup> Adam Smyth, "Almanacs, Annotators, and Life-Writing in Early Modern England", *English Literary Renaissance* 38, no.2 (2008), 200-244; Elspeth Graham, "Women's writing and the self" in *Women and Literature in Britain 1500-1700*, ed. Helen Wilcox, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 209-233.

<sup>97</sup> Narveson, *Bible Readers and Lay Writers*, 10

The archives of the Gell and Harley families demonstrate this diversity of life writing forms. The simplest form was a written list of marks of assurance composed during devotional exercise. Katharine Gell kept a book for lists of 'marks' and discussed it with her spiritual correspondent Robert Porter.<sup>98</sup> Marie-Louise Coolahan argued that written occasional meditations could function in this way as 'proof of the moments of grace in a teleological narrative of the self'.<sup>99</sup> Sir Edward Harley used his birthday and occasional meditations as a record of his sins, blessings from God, and signs of election. Jacqueline Eales has shown how the Harley family placed great importance on recognising the signs of election. Lady Brilliana Harley's theological commonplace book was devoted to the religious behaviour of the elect and in it she recorded passages from many texts which would help the individual discern if he or she was a member of the elect.<sup>100</sup> The commonplace book acted as an ideal against which Lady Brilliana could measure her own faith and behaviour while performing self-examination. Far from being an abstract intellectual exercise the composition of her commonplace book is highly implicated in her daily devotional practice.

Spiritual diaries also served as a site for recording and tracing the development of sins, blessings, and assurance of salvation. Indeed, keeping and rereading a diary was a method of self-examination. Not only could the individual take note of their marks of grace they could also acknowledge and repent their sins in supplication before God.<sup>101</sup> Historians have acknowledged, yet struggled to accept, that diary keeping was widely practiced before it was strongly recommended in the prescriptive literature. Alec Ryrie wrote 'we are forced to admit that the spiritual diary or autobiography was conceived nearly or fully independently, in many different forms' by many different people. It seems likely that these individuals were

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<sup>98</sup> See previous chapter, 157.

<sup>99</sup> Coolahan, "Redeeming parcels of time", 131

<sup>100</sup> Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads*, 49

<sup>101</sup> Cambers, "Reading, the Godly, and Self-Writing in England", 798

responding to a 'shared social and theological predicament'<sup>102</sup> It certainly accounts for the variety of forms and why, despite Ryrie's preference for the term diary, many historians have chosen 'life-writing' and other more nebulous terms.<sup>103</sup> John Beadle was the first early modern author to discuss diary keeping at length, arguing that those with a good store of experience 'every experiment of Gods favour to us, being a good prop for our faith in the future' need to keep 'a diary of all Gods gracious dealings with them'.<sup>104</sup> In the preface, John Fuller said the practice of diary keeping encouraged thankfulness for God's blessings and reading the diary would 'procure rest to our souls...[and] stir us up to honour our deliverer'.<sup>105</sup> Before the reader had even got into the main text of the treatise he or she was introduced to the key benefit of diary keeping, the ability to revisit ones past experience.

Some diaries are well known and have appeared in modern editions. Lady Margaret Hoby's diary has been well used by scholars. Hoby's most recent editor, Joanna Moody, believed the diary was intended as a 'vehicle for self-assessment, and as a help to Lady Hoby's memory of God's goodness to her'. Hoby did indeed reread her diary. By the end of March 1605, the diary had become quite irregular but on 1 April, Hoby resolved to 'writt my daies journee as before, becaus, in the readinge over some of my former spent time, I funde some profit might be made of that course'.<sup>106</sup> While she became more assiduous in writing every day, the entries remained sparse. Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick's diary from the later seventeenth century is also well known. Extracts from the diary first appeared in Anthony Walker's *The Virtuous Woman Found*, the published version of the sermon he preached at her funeral in April 1678. A portion of the diary from 1666-1672 was transcribed by Rich's

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<sup>102</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 301; Clarke and Longfellow, "Elizabeth Isham's Autobiographical Writings", Warwick Centre for the Study of the Renaissance, accessed 25 February 2017, <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/ren/projects/isham/texts/>

<sup>103</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 300, n14

<sup>104</sup> John Beadle, *The journal or diary of a thankful Christian presented in some meditations upon Numb. 33:2*, (London: Printed by E. Cotes for Tho. Parkhurst, 1667), dedication

<sup>105</sup> Beadle, *The journal or diary of a thankful Christian*, preface

<sup>106</sup> *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 210

domestic chaplain, Thomas Woodrooffe, and was published in 1847.<sup>107</sup> Rich's diary is much more voluble and reflective than Hoby's. It functioned as a space to document her devotions and to evaluate the spiritual fervour of her response. On February 9, Rich retired to meditate but was 'discomposed' and could not be serious, however her prayer made her heart breathe after God. It was these evaluations which added the most value to Rich's diary. Rich frequently reread her diary multiplying therein the benefit of keeping it. On 23 September 1667 Rich reported that her 'spirit was much revived' from reading in her diary.<sup>108</sup>

While women's spiritual diaries have been popular with recent scholars, diaries were also routinely kept by early modern men. Historian John Fielding described the diary of Robert Woodford, kept 1637-41, 'as a study of the workings of grace over time', or a tool of self-examination as discussed in the previous chapter.<sup>109</sup> Sir Simonds D'Ewes started a diary on 27 February 1620 when, according to his autobiography, he 'began to pen or sett downe each particular daies passages of mine own life which were most memorable, which course I have continued to this day.'<sup>110</sup> His diaries were written in a cipher or 'a strange handwriting consisting of an alphabet of strange letters'. This can be seen in the diaries which have survived.<sup>111</sup> One of these has been deciphered and published but three diaries remain locked in code.<sup>112</sup> D'Ewes used the diaries to record details of his religious activity, such as the sermons he attended or his preparation for receiving the sacrament.

It was common for diarists to develop and reshape their writings into other forms of self-writing such as autobiographies. One prominent example is Elizabeth Isham, whose

<sup>107</sup> This is the version I have used. The autograph is in the British Library Additional Manuscripts, 27351-27355

<sup>108</sup> *Diary of Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick*, 129, 23 September 1667

<sup>109</sup> John Fielding, "Opposition to the Personal Rule of Charles I: The Diary of Robert Woodford, 1637-1641", *The Historical Journal*, 31 no 4, (1988), 769-788.

<sup>110</sup> British Library, London, Harley Manuscripts, 646, f.46

<sup>111</sup> A fragment from 1621 is preserved in the British Library, Harley Manuscripts, 486, f.56-65; 1 January 1621/22 until 20 April 1624 is preserved in Harley 481; January 1642/3 to March 1646/7 is preserved in Harley 482-4, which includes Latin as well as D'Ewes' cipher.

<sup>112</sup> Elizabeth Bourcier, *The Diary of Sir Simonds D'Ewes 1622-1624*, (Paris: Didier, 1974)

autobiographical texts have recently received much critical attention from historians. The discovery of Isham's 'My Book of Remembrance' in Princeton University Library has breathed new life into her other materials preserved in Northamptonshire Record Office.<sup>113</sup> While discerning Elizabeth Isham's precise religiosity has proved complex it is clear, as Erica Longfellow has argued, that the two autobiographical documents she produced owe much to the framework of godly self-examination.<sup>114</sup> Like Isham, Sir Simonds D'Ewes used his diaries to complete an autobiographical project. Begun in 1636 and finished in 1637, he had decided to 'reduce [the diaries] into a shorter narracion in this volume ensuing...because... [it is] likely to prove utterly unuseful to anie but my selfe.' D'Ewes' autobiography explored his self-perceived growth in grace. He saw his conversion as a gradual process by which he became aware of the importance of practising a godly life.

Hindmarsh defined autobiography as a 'creative and significant act of interpreting in selecting, arranging, and presenting the events of one's life.'<sup>115</sup> D'Ewes presented the events of his life, and his adoption of religious exercises, as stages along the road to a truly godly life. The reliability of this narrative is called into question however by the highly emplotted nature of conversion narratives.<sup>116</sup> Due to the puritan teleology of justification, grace, and salvation; autobiographers need to impose standardized patterns on their experiences and shape them to conform to the contemporary notion of conversion as a process.<sup>117</sup> For Webster, a spiritual diary or autobiography is 'a mechanism for turning the ephemerality of action and speech into an artefact', it produces a material site for the self. The autobiography

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<sup>113</sup> Elizabeth Isham, 'My Book of Remembrance'. c.1639 ed. Elizabeth Clarke and Erica Longfellow. [http://www.warwick.ac.uk/english/perdita/Isham/index\\_bor.htm](http://www.warwick.ac.uk/english/perdita/Isham/index_bor.htm)

<sup>114</sup> Erica Longfellow, "'Take unto ye words': Elizabeth Isham's 'Booke of Remembrance' and Puritan Cultural Forms" in *The Intellectual Culture of Puritan Women, 1558–1680*, ed. Johanna Harris and Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 125; also Isaac Stephens, "'My Cheefest Work': The Making of the Spiritual Autobiography of Elizabeth Isham", *Midland History*, 34 no 2, (2009), 181–203

<sup>115</sup> D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005), 3

<sup>116</sup> Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, 7

<sup>117</sup> Webster, "Writing to Redundancy", 43; Watkins, *The Puritan Experience*, 55

then makes one's past experience concrete and accessible, and re-reading it can help one's past sense of grace nurture assurance in the present.<sup>118</sup> There are signs that D'Ewes re-read his autobiography from marginal additions and alterations.

Sir Simonds D'Ewes did not confine himself to personal matter in his diary and autobiography, he also chronicled domestic and international politics as God's providence in the wider world.<sup>119</sup> Positive developments were glad tidings from the divine hand while afflictions were proof that the godly were the true church.<sup>120</sup> By incorporating these events into the narrative of his own life D'Ewes is constructing an identity for himself as part of the wider godly community. Historian Margo Todd wrote of D'Ewes contemporary Samuel Ward, that he 'fashioned himself primarily in communal rather than individualistic terms identifying himself with the community of the godly in perpetual readiness to combat the enemy, the forces of the antichrist.'<sup>121</sup> D'Ewes' assimilation of the whole true church's experience into his own piety and household religious practice must be seen as a corrective to common assumptions about the essentially introspective nature of puritan piety, practise, and spiritual autobiography.

Another challenge to the use of spiritual diaries and autobiographies as evidence of puritan spiritual introspection is Andrew Cambers' argument that much of this literature envisaged a readership beyond the individual. Cambers highlights examples like John Rastrick, Henry Newcome, and Nehemiah Wallington who included prefaces and epistles to the reader in their manuscript diaries and autobiographies.<sup>122</sup> Often the desire of the writer was that their writing would be useful in the spiritual development of their family. Elizabeth Isham, for

<sup>118</sup> Webster, "Writing to Redundancy", 47

<sup>119</sup> British Library, London, Harley Manuscripts, 646, fols.87, 112

<sup>120</sup> British Library, London, Harley Manuscripts, 646, fols.104, 108

<sup>121</sup> Todd, "Puritan Self-fashioning: The Diary of Samuel Ward", 241. See also: John Fielding, "Opposition to the Personal Rule of Charles I: The Diary of Robert Woodford, 1637-1641", *The Historical Journal*, 31 no 4, (1988), 769-788.

<sup>122</sup> Cambers, "Reading, the Godly and Self-writing", 803-6; John Rastrick was a late seventeenth century after-dissenter.



instance, composed her autobiography with her nieces in mind.<sup>123</sup> Cambers argued strongly in favour of the continued use of memoirs within families and refers to them as 'cherished' family possessions.<sup>124</sup> Cambers' work points towards the role of family manuscripts in future family religion. Further research is needed in this area but these comments suggest the significance of domestic religion, and its material remains, for the construction and continuation of godly family identity. The careful preservation of material artefacts of domestic religion in the Harley family, including the prayer notes of Sir Robert Harley, the letters of Lady Brilliana Harley and the meditations of Sir Edward Harley could be seen in this light. The next generation of the Harley family looked back at their ancestors with pride and they occupied an important place in family identity. Sir Edward Harley's son, another Sir Edward, penned several memoirs of the family in which his grandparents and parents featured heavily.<sup>125</sup>

### **Family reading**

Andrew Cambers argued persuasively for family reading as a key practice shaping godly identity. He drew extensively on Lady Margaret Hoby's diary to explore the different forms of communal reading in the household: the formal semi-public 'lector' in the hall, group reading with the chaplain Richard Rhodes and other members of the household, and reading and discussion in pairs. Scriptural reading was prominent but the Bible was not the only text read communally in the family. Hoby's diary is peppered with references to communal reading of alternative devotional texts, particularly godly authors such as Perkins, Cartwright, and Greenham. Cambers highlighted the cyclical nature of much of this reading as they covered the text over several evenings. In the autumn of 1599 the family read John Foxes's *Acts and Monuments*. On 28 September, Hoby recorded 'I hard one of the men read of the

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<sup>123</sup> Elizabeth Isham, 'My Book of Remembrance'. c.1639 ed. Elizabeth Clarke and Erica Longfellow. [http://www.warwick.ac.uk/english/perdita/Isham/index\\_bor.htm](http://www.warwick.ac.uk/english/perdita/Isham/index_bor.htm) f.2r marginal note.

<sup>124</sup> Cambers, "Reading, the Godly and Self-Writing", 821

<sup>125</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70089, Misc.95

book of marters' and on 1 October 'I hard Helurn read of the book of marters'.<sup>126</sup> Otherwise known as *The Book of Martyrs*, Foxe's book had a special place in godly piety and identity. The text chronicled the suffering of the earliest evangelical Protestants during the reign of Mary I. This reading was performed by Rhodes and other members of the household. Cambers argued that this style of reading strengthened the godly in their faith and also emphasised the interconnections between reading and other practices of domestic religion.<sup>127</sup> Communal reading inspired communal and individual prayer, note taking, godly conference, meditation, and diary writing.

With communal religious reading covered in depth by Cambers, I single out only one further aspect of communal reading: sermon repetition. In the previous section I explored the multiple acts of writing and reading which turned rough notes made during sermons into reconstructed fair-copy sermons. The motivation to do so was to reread the sermon in the domestic setting, both individually and communally. Sermon repetition has received little critical attention from historians. Usually described as an act of communal reading, sermon repetition may be more accurately described as domestic lay-preaching. The communal domestic reading of the sermon reconstructed from notes is the culmination of a series of reading and writing practices. Each act of reading or writing altered, changed, and shaped the original sermon into a new sermon; a new text and performance. When it was 'repeated' it was essentially a new, domestic, sermon shaped to suit the householder and his theological and devotional positions. For Cambers, sermon repetition is the key practice of family religion which blurs the boundary between conformist patriarchal practice and potential radical conventicle.<sup>128</sup> He argued that potential was always inherent within communal

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<sup>126</sup> *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 24-25

<sup>127</sup> Cambers, *Godly Reading*, 91

<sup>128</sup> Cambers, *Godly Reading*, 84

reading but was transformed from a broadly acceptable part of devotion in the early seventeenth century by changing religious and political context post-restoration.

## Letter writing

The traditional interpretational approach to letter writing has been autobiographical. Literary scholars approached letters as a supplementary source to an author's literary writing; they often 'authorised an interpretation of a text...but their own textuality was frequently ignored'. Historians, meanwhile, often regarded letters as an 'unproblematic historical source, giving us unmediated access to a writer's thoughts'.<sup>129</sup> As James Daybell acknowledged, letters do 'convey a rich flavour of a writer's 'personality'.<sup>130</sup> Women's letters are 'the largest field of recent scholarly inquiry' and certainly Daybell's survey of recent works on seventeenth century letters bears this out.<sup>131</sup> For historians of women and women's writing, letters have been seen as giving unique access to women's thoughts and self-perceptions. But far from an essential 'self', the 'self' presented in correspondence can only be understood in the context of the relationship between the correspondents, the purpose of the correspondence, and considerations of gender, social status, and religion, among other traits.<sup>132</sup> Scholar Gary Sneider has commented on the absence of 'letters and religion' in Daybell's survey indicating the pervasive nature of religion.<sup>133</sup>

The remainder of this chapter discusses letter writing as a domestic religious practice, rather than religious letters. Personal correspondence is simultaneously an important source of evidence for and a material artefact of domestic religion. The text of a letter can be mined for information about domestic religion, however, letter writing has not normally been

<sup>129</sup> Amanda Gilroy and W.M Verhoeven, "Introduction", *Prose Studies*, 19, no 2, (1996): 121-6

<sup>130</sup> James Daybell, "Letters" in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*, ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 188

<sup>131</sup> James Daybell, "Recent Studies in Seventeenth-Century Letters", *English Literary Renaissance*, 36, no 1, (2006): 135-170

<sup>132</sup> Daybell, "Letters", 188

<sup>133</sup> Gary Sneider, "Introduction" in *Debating the Faith: Religion and Letter Writing in Great Britain 1550-1800*, ed. Anne Dunan-Page and Clotilde Prunier, (London: Springer, 2013), 1-15

considered part of domestic religion. I argue for letter writing as a distinct and vital practice of domestic religion. Letters are both a text and an object produced while performing devotions in the home. The content of a letter does not need to be overtly religious to be a product of domestic religion. Rather, it is the context in which the letter was produced, read, preserved, and potentially disseminated that gave correspondence its place in domestic religion.

There was no place for letter writing in the schemes for holy living sketched by the prescriptive authors. However, writing and reading correspondence loomed large in the life of people such as the Harleys. Lay people exchanged letters with each other, and with clerical associates, discussing religious ideas and politics and sharing spiritual advice, edification, and encouragement. Jacqueline Eales' work on letter writing identified how letters were a vital mechanism of godly sociability. Their numerical scarcity meant that the godly were not always able to reside in an area with a godly preaching minister or other godly lay people which led them to seek out like-minded people who might be at some distance. Letter writing therefore was a performance and strengthening of these bonds of shared belief and piety. Letter exchange was further prompted by concern to give and receive spiritual edification as well as discuss their search for assurance of salvation. Eales notes 'the spiritual counselling of the laity through the medium of letter writing was an important element in the cultural construction of the Godly community'.<sup>134</sup> For historians such as Eales and Johanna Harris letter writing epitomises the sociable and interactive nature of puritan culture.<sup>135</sup>

Letters contrast with the diaries and meditations which have been the main source material for those scholars who have characterised godly religiosity as introspective. Mary Morissey and Gillian Wright argued that scholars who drew their interpretation of early modern female

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<sup>134</sup> Jacqueline Eales, "An Ancient Mother in our Israel: Mary, Lady Vere" in *The Intellectual Culture of Puritan Women, 1558–1680*, ed. Johanna Harris and Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 87

<sup>135</sup> Harris, "But I thinke and beleeeve", 109

religiosity from such 'introspective' genres have inevitably characterised it as solitary and melancholic. Letters, meanwhile, show pious women as active participants in networks of spiritual support; discussing religious controversies and politics and offering and receiving spiritual advice and encouragement.<sup>136</sup>

Correspondence with the clergy was a significant activity for the laity and was conducted for a wide variety of reasons. This exchange was often between a householder and his local minister or other clerical clients and might relate to local news, family affairs, and secular advice as well as religious and devotional matters. Chaplains or local ministers might take a significant role in household religion and report activity or take instruction. The correspondence might discuss and debate religious politics and theology, or be more pastoral with devotional advice and support shared.

The correspondence Sir Robert Harley exchanged with the ministers he appointed to Brampton Bryan show them discussing arrangements for household religion at Brampton Bryan. On 14 January 1629 for example, Brampton Bryan rector Thomas Pierson promised to keep a fast day on the following Wednesday to mark the day of public humiliation and give thanks to God for his mercies to the family.<sup>137</sup> Pierson died in 1633 and Sir Robert's efforts to secure a replacement occasioned wide-ranging correspondence among his clerical contacts until he settled upon Stanley Gower. Gower's extant correspondence with Sir Robert dates primarily from 1640-1642 and is marked by discussions of the state of the ministry in Herefordshire and ideas for church reform. Other letters, however, strike a more pastorally supportive tone for Sir Robert's work in Parliament. In December 1641, as the long Parliament were impeaching twelve bishops, Gower sought to bolster Sir Robert in this

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<sup>136</sup> Mary Morrissey and Gillian Wright, "Piety and Sociability in Early Modern Women's letters", *Women's Writing*, 13, no 1, (2006): 44-5

<sup>137</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70001, f.354, Thomas Pierson to Sir Robert Harley, January 14 1628/9

course of action, praying for their 'weighty business' and reassuring him 'courage (worthy patrone) for ...the atheists, papists and prelates our common enemy, ar now to be found and swept away'.<sup>138</sup>

The Harley family also corresponded with their ministers on more pastoral and devotional matters. When Edward Harley went up to Oxford in late 1638, Gower counselled the teenager about the bad examples and temptations he may face there. He was to watch over himself 'be always looking at your nature & fear that it act its part above grace in you'.<sup>139</sup> These letters exchanged between Harley family members and their local ministers enabled them to seek each others' advice and consolation as they would have in daily interactions in Brampton Bryan. These relationships often lasted for many years. Lady Mary Vere corresponded with clerics who had at one time or another been chaplains to her husband, Sir Horace Vere, including the non-conformists William Ames and John Burgess.<sup>140</sup> The Gell family conducted extensive spiritual epistolary exchange with their former local rectors John Oldfield and Robert Porter, and household chaplain Francis Tallents.

Sir Robert Harley's wider circle of clerical correspondents included the London clergy in whose parishes he resided when in London; William Gouge and John Stoughton.<sup>141</sup> Other clerical correspondents included Thomas Gataker, pastor at Rotherhithe, James Ussher, Bishop of Amagh; John Workman, non-conformist lecturer in Gloucester and John Brinsley the Yarmouth Presbyterian preacher. This correspondence included news but also theological questions, solidarity in the face of the afflictions of the church and consolation in the face of personal afflictions. Sir Robert initiated a correspondence with Gataker in which he posed

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<sup>138</sup> Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads*, 122; British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts 70105, Stanley Gower to Sir Robert Harley, December 4 1641; Stanley Gower to Sir Robert Harley, 5 January 1642

<sup>139</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70002, f.202

<sup>140</sup> Eales, "An Ancient Mother in our Israel", 86-7

<sup>141</sup> William Gouge, in whose Blackfriars parish he had lodgings in the 1610s and 20s and John Stoughton, curate at St Mary Aldermanbury where he resided in the 1630s.

him a series of questions regarding the 'controversy between Rome and us'.<sup>142</sup> William Gouge counselled Sir Robert that a sickness he suffered in June 1613 was a wise affliction from God to increase the grace begun in him.<sup>143</sup> Later in 1622 Gouge and Sir Robert consoled each other about the challenges facing the church; Gouge felt the godly should be thankful for some of the sorrow afforded but that the community should also 'make matter of humiliation' for other afflictions.<sup>144</sup> The political turmoil of the late 1640s prompted correspondence designed to support Sir Robert's faith. Thomas Froyssell assured him that the progress of the gospel in Herefordshire was so dependent on his zeal that God would 'preserve you long unto us'.<sup>145</sup> Stanley Gower meanwhile, who was now based in London, assured Sir Robert that the ministers of London were praying for him in the aftermath of Pride's Purge.<sup>146</sup> Sir Robert's wide network of correspondents reflected his place of high regard within the godly community and his role in the Long Parliament.

Some clerics came recommended for the particular spiritual needs of the lay-person. John Dod was lauded as the leader of the early seventeenth century puritan clergy and a specialist in counselling the spiritually afflicted.<sup>147</sup> He was one of a number of clerics who corresponded with Lady Mary Vere following the death of her son and his services were also called upon by the Isham family to minister to Lady Judith in her spiritual despair, although he was able to do this in person.<sup>148</sup> The later equivalent of Dod was Richard Baxter. Baxter's extant correspondence of over 1,200 letters exchanged with over 350 correspondents

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<sup>142</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70105, Thomas Gataker to Sir Robert Harley, 18 June 1621

<sup>143</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70001, f.125, William Gouge to Sir Robert Harley, 24 June 1613

<sup>144</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70001, f.233, William Gouge to Sir Robert Harley, 11 May 1622

<sup>145</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70105, Thomas Froyssell to Sir Robert Harley, 9 November 1648

<sup>146</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70105, Stanley Gower to Sir Robert Harley, 22 December 1648

<sup>147</sup> Eales, "An Ancient Mother in our Israel", 86-7

<sup>148</sup> Elizabeth Isham's *Booke of Remeberances*, Warwick Centre for the Study of the Renaissance, accessed 25 February 2017, <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/ren/projects/isham/texts/>, f.11v-11, 13v-14, 14v

demonstrates his commitment to long-distance pastoral ministry.<sup>149</sup> Katherine Gell was one such distressed soul that Baxter counselled through correspondence.

Following the death of her infant son in late 1654, Katherine Gell corresponded with local puritan rector Robert Porter concerning her spiritual despair. We only have Porter's letters, copied into Katherine's letter book; they number over twenty and are almost exclusively dedicated to spiritual comfort and advice over an eighteen month period. In June 1655, Porter recommended that Katherine consult Richard Baxter's 'direct: for spt peace & comf: fm page 533 to page 538 read it seriously' to convince her not to dwell only on her sins and weaknesses but also on the love of Christ.<sup>150</sup> It seems that Katherine took this advice as she subsequently sought out Baxter himself as another epistolary spiritual counsellor. Her initial letter to Baxter referenced his work *The Saints' Everlasting Rest* and expressed anxiety at her inability to perform all the Christian duties contained therein, particularly those relating to her role as a mistress of a household, in a manner that would give her comfort and assurance of grace.<sup>151</sup> Baxter initially offered reassurance, an explanation of the performance of Christian duties and advice on promoting the spiritual welfare of her household.<sup>152</sup>

Historian Keith Condie's analysis of the subsequent Gell-Baxter correspondence concentrates on the tensions inherent within puritan practical divinity with its emphasis on self-examination and personal responsibility to work hard to fulfil Christian duties. Katherine Gell's spiritual difficulties suggest that, for some, the force of expectation in the advice of pastors such as Baxter could be 'debilitating'.<sup>153</sup> In that sense the Gell-Porter-Baxter correspondence could be seen an example of letter-writing as 'a form of cathartic or

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<sup>149</sup> N. H. Keeble, "Baxter, Richard (1615–1691)", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, Oct 2009, accessed 26 Jan 2013,

<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1734>

<sup>150</sup> Derbyshire Record Office, Gell of Hopton Hall, D3287/47/7, 61-62, June 1655

<sup>151</sup> Keith Condie, "Some Further Correspondence Between Richard Baxter and Katherine Gell", *The Historical Journal*, 53, no 1, (2010): 165–176, 168

<sup>152</sup> Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, Gell of Hopton Hall, D3287/47/7, 155-65

<sup>153</sup> Condie, "Some Further Correspondence", 175



psychological release, through which women formulated and worked out issues and concerns'.<sup>154</sup> Letter writing in the manner of Katherine Gell is reminiscent of other domestic religious practices related to achieving assurance of salvation such a self-examination and godly conference. Baxter himself suggested to Gell that local able ministers 'who by their fuller acquaintance with your selfe and your condition' were more qualified to give her advice.<sup>155</sup> He believed that letter writing should not substitute godly conference. Katherine Gell copied Baxter and Porter's letters into a letter book, transforming them into a personalised manual of spiritual guidance for future consultation and comfort. Her epistolary practices were closely integrated into her self-examination and personal devotional practice.

It is not surprising to observe ministers, like Richard Baxter, engaging in spiritual epistolary exchange with the laity; but the authority and intimacy of the spiritual advice in the letters exchanged by the laity perhaps is. Morrissey and Wright speak of the compassion, optimism and authority which mark the letters of encouragement and exhortation exchanged between members of extended family and networks of co-religionists.<sup>156</sup> Jacqueline Eales explored the Harley's family networks and concluded that shared religious sympathies defined their relationships with their extended family circle. Eales points out the conspicuous absence of the Catholic branches of the Harley family in their correspondence and visitors, while Protestant relatives featured heavily.<sup>157</sup> While the Harleys could maintain cordial relations with those who did not share their religious outlook for a variety of social and political reasons, they could not engage in mutual spiritual edification and religious solidarity. Instead the Harleys cultivated relationships with a wide circle of puritan relatives and friends who were part of the godly community and many of these connections were made and maintained by epistolary exchange.

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<sup>154</sup> Daybell, "Letters", 188-9

<sup>155</sup> Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, Gell of Hopton Hall, D3287/47/7, 155

<sup>156</sup> Morrissey and Wright, "Piety and sociability", 46-9

<sup>157</sup> Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads*, 40-42

Close to Sir Robert in religious sympathy was John Bruen of Stapleford in Cheshire. The pair exchanged letters in the early 1620s and it is likely that the connection was first made through Thomas Pierson, who was from Cheshire. We can surmise that Sir Robert had been sharing news of concern and hope regarding the fortunes of the godly community for Bruen writes in response 'such good news as you imperte must neids anymate our souls and put us in good hope of a happie tyme'.<sup>158</sup> In addition to shared religious sympathy, Sir Robert's domestic correspondence could also be liable to heated religious and theological debate, such as contained within a series of letters exchanged with his cousin Sir Edward Herbert.<sup>159</sup> The exchange concerned Hebert's developing rationalist and anti-Calvinist approach to religion and Sir Robert's challenge to these positions.<sup>160</sup> The friendship did not survive this disagreement over religious essentials and the exchange serves as a dramatic example of exploring religious beliefs and ideas through letter-writing.

Sir Robert's activities as a local and national office-holder took him away from Brampton Bryan regularly, prompting a vigorous correspondence with his family back in Herefordshire. Unfortunately, few of Sir Robert's own letters have survived; they were probably destroyed by Lady Brilliana during the siege of the castle, and we have to reconstruct their correspondence from Lady Brilliana's letters alone. At first glance their correspondence appears to be largely concerned with family news, estate affairs, and politics, but close attention to the themes running throughout the letters reveals them to be suffused with religious significance. The world view apparent in their correspondence is one underlain by a providential framework in which the shifting fortunes of the family and the wider godly community are directly attributed to God's afflictions and mercies.

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<sup>158</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70105, John Bruen to Sir Robert Harley, undated

<sup>159</sup> Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads*, 39

<sup>160</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70001, ff. 147, 150, 151, 153, Sir Edward Herbert to Sir Robert Harley; Sir Robert Harley's draft replies are preserved in Additional Manuscripts 70105.

The greatest test of Lady Brilliana's personal faith was Sir Robert's absences, which she lamented in almost every letter and looked forward to reuniting through God's providence. On 19 May 1626, she wrote 'You cannot tell howe much I desire to see you: but I knowe it is gods will it should be soo and therefore I submit to it'.<sup>161</sup> The 1620s were a time of thankfulness for the blessings God bestowed. Lady Brilliana wrote to Sir Robert following the birth of their second son in April 1626 'I doo with you give our good god thanks for this great blessing which he has given us of another son and all our care must be not only to speake thanks but to shewe it in our lives'.<sup>162</sup> In the 1640s with the political situation in Herefordshire deteriorating Lady Brilliana assured her husband of her continued faith in God; she wrote: 'doo not thinke that I am yet weary of the hand of my god and it is my comfort that I share with the servants of god in their trubells and I hope I shall in theare comforts'.<sup>163</sup> This excerpt reveals how she integrated their personal experiences into the narrative of the wider godly community. Lady Brilliana expressed this in her letters to her husband; communicating the strength of her faith, sharing her personal responses to events and involving him in her religious development. Their correspondence replaced the daily godly conference they would have shared had Sir Robert remained at Brampton Bryan.

Lady Brilliana discussed news about the cause of international Calvinism, national and local affairs in correspondence with both her husband and her son Edward. Her letters interpreted events in providential and apocalyptic terms. In November 1638, Brilliana reminded Ned that Christ had foretold great troubles and wars 'both to purg his chruch of ipocrits, and that his enimies at the last may be utterly distroyed' which should be welcome as it will bring the church to glory.<sup>164</sup> A few months later Brilliana felt the course of events had shown the time

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<sup>161</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70110, f.37, 19 May 1626; f.39, 23 May 1626

<sup>162</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70110, f.8, 24 February 1626; f.23, 15 April 1626; Additional Manuscripts, 70001, f.310, Brilliana Harley to Robert Harley, 21 April 1626

<sup>163</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70110, f.78, 28 January 1643

<sup>164</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter XII, 9-11, 17 November 1638

had come for wicked men to be called to account; 'theaire day is at hand'.<sup>165</sup> Jacqueline Eales' work demonstrated the extent to which the Harleys interpreted the political struggle of the early 1640s in religious terms; as a battle against the forces of Catholicism.<sup>166</sup> In a November 1640 letter to Edward, Brilliana conveyed her faith that God would reform the church and enable 'his children' to triumph.<sup>167</sup> This sense of being part of an embattled minority was heightened as war broke out and Lady Brilliana found herself isolated and vulnerable in a predominantly royalist area. As Brampton was directly threatened, she begged that the godly would pray for them.<sup>168</sup> However, she always assured Ned of her providential faith in God to see them through their afflictions.<sup>169</sup> By situating their own hopes, fears, and afflictions in the wider conflict Lady Brilliana claimed for her family a place within the godly community. Her letters negotiated a distinctive puritan identity based on a series of positions on issues of the time.<sup>170</sup> Joanna Harris noted that historians' models of female puritan piety largely ignored the wider context of their domestic religious activities. She argued that attention to epistolary networks can reveal women's roles in negotiating and disseminating knowledge and ideas and political and religious currents and discourses. Letter-writing, a domestic activity, was therefore vital in constructing and sustaining the identity of the godly community.

Lady Brilliana's letters to her son also show her intellectual engagement with religious ideas. As discussed earlier in this chapter, they regularly exchanged religious books and discussed them in their letters.<sup>171</sup> The scholar Raymond Anslement attributed Lady Brilliana's involvement in her son's reading to a motherly desire that he should find his way to Christ

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<sup>165</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter XXIV, 28-29, 8 February 1639

<sup>166</sup> Jacqueline Eales, "Patriarchy, puritanism and politics: The letters of Lady Brilliana Harley (1598-1643)" in *Women's Letters and Letter Writing in England, 1450-1700*, ed. J. Daybell and C. Brown, (London: Palgrave, 2001), 143-158, 151

<sup>167</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter LXXXV, 101-2, undated

<sup>168</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter CLXXXIV, 187-8 28 January 1643

<sup>169</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter CXXXIV, 153-4 23 April 1642; letter CXLV, 170-1 20 June 1642

<sup>170</sup> Harris, "But I thinke and beleeeve", 108-9

<sup>171</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter XIII, 11-12, 24 November 1638, letter XLI, 54-5 20 May 1639

through good books.<sup>172</sup> However, work on Brilliana's letters by Jacqueline Eales and Johanna Harris makes clear she 'participated in a world of reading and book exchange, theological discourse, literary emulation and factional political alliance and argument' primarily through correspondence. For Harris, Brilliana's letters were the primary outlet for her intellectual endeavour, and moral advice and spiritual edification for her son gave it practical application.<sup>173</sup> Her letters to Edward offered the opportunity to display her learning and religious understanding. While confined to her bed in May 1639, Brilliana chose to read 'the life of Luther, by rwite by Mr. Calluen'. Brilliana's discussion of the book focussed on the lessons that could be applied to their situation.<sup>174</sup> Prior to her marriage, Brilliana had kept a theological commonplace which she had preserved but not continued. Her letters replaced her commonplace book as the main site for recording her intellectual endeavours and religious development.



**Figure 9: Ruin of Brampton Bryan Castle, Lady Brilliana Harley's chamber is reported to have been the upper level of the intact window casements. Author's Photograph, Summer 2016, taken by kind permission of Edward Harley.**

<sup>172</sup> Raymond A. Anselment, "Katherine Paston and Brilliana Harley: Maternal Letters and the Genre of Mother's Advice", *Studies in Philology*, 101, no 4, (2004): 431-453, 445

<sup>173</sup> Harris, "But I thinke and beleeeve", 114

<sup>174</sup> Harris, "But I thinke and beleeeve", 114; *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter XL, 51-3, 10 May 1639

Letter-writing enabled Brilliana to continue religious conference begun in person. Thomas Goodwin's *The Returne of Prayers* (1636) was sent up to Oxford with a place marked for Edward's tutor Edward Perkins' attention. They had discussed joint prayer while Perkins was at Brampton Bryan and Brilliana continued the debate in epistolary form. Brilliana's standpoint was that God did not hold back answering prayers for the want of 'our joyeing with the rest'; where 'our' meant the godly and that joining in prayer meant earnestly desiring the same rather than simply consenting to the same.<sup>175</sup> This debate went to the heart of puritan identity and unity of practice; and we see this being negotiated and worked through in their correspondence.<sup>176</sup> Brilliana's correspondence connected the reading she performed as part of domestic practice to the wider godly community. She read with an eye to the implications for the godly community and was ready to share and debate these insights. As such, her letters demonstrate how letter writing was a key mechanism for 'negotiating and defining doctrinal orthodoxy' within the godly community.<sup>177</sup>

Lady Brilliana and Edward discussed personal faith in their correspondence; with mother imparting spiritual advice to son. She advised him not to 'neglect that constant sarvis you owe to your God' and regularly reminded him to perform his religious duties of the Sabbath, ember days, and fasts.<sup>178</sup> She was concerned that he not neglect either public or personal devotion; writing 'Be constant in holy dutys; let publicke and privet goo to geather. Let not the one shoulder out the other'.<sup>179</sup> However, rather than didactically stressing prayer and other exercises as a duty, Brilliana took advantage of their close relationship to induce him to their performance through example and emphasis on its 'incomparable sweetness'. She called it a 'sweet thinge to have privet conference with our God, to hom we may make knowne all our

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<sup>175</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter XLIX, 64-5, 18 October 1639

<sup>176</sup> Harris, "But I thinke and beleeeve", 116

<sup>177</sup> Harris, "But I thinke and beleeeve", 108

<sup>178</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter IX, 7, 25 October 1638, letter X, 8, 2 November 1638

<sup>179</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter XII, 9-11, 17 November 1638; letter XVIII, 19-20, 14 January 1639

wants, all our foolyes, and discover all our weakness, in acurance that he will supply our wants, and will not abrade us with our infirmetys'.<sup>180</sup> Brilliana placed great emphasis on her experience, and hastened to share that experience in their correspondence.<sup>181</sup>

Brilliana also bought her experience to bear when coaching Edward to see afflictions as God's providence and an opportunity for improving himself. Brilliana assured Edward that she herself found her afflictions to be sweet as they caused her to recognise the will of God and the bitterness of sin.<sup>182</sup> Brilliana's experimental knowledge of the sweetness of private service to God and of his afflictions combined in one letter written in March 1638. She compared her life with affliction, when service to God takes away the bitterness of the affliction, to her life without affliction, when she found the service of God more sweet than all her other blessings.<sup>183</sup> In many ways, Brilliana's correspondence with her son reads like a spiritual diary. She recorded her afflictions and responses, expressing her assurance of election and God's love. Her letters enabled her to discuss and work through her own spiritual experience while presenting it as guidance.

Letters were vital in maintaining family relationships at a distance; they were a 'means of speaking' that continued close family relationships.<sup>184</sup> Brilliana expressed this vividly in her correspondence with her son. She wrote 'it was very wellcome to me, for sence I can not see you, I am glad to have the contentment of a paper conversing with you' and in another place 'for sence i can not speake with you, noe see you so offten as i desire, i am willing to make theas paper messages my deputye'.<sup>185</sup> Morrissey and Wright argue that where religious devotion was an established aspect of that relationship then letters might take on spiritual

<sup>180</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter XXIII, 28, 2 February 1639

<sup>181</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter XV, 14-5, 11 December 1638

<sup>182</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter XXXVII, 47-48, 29 April 1639; letter LVI, 73-4, 22 November 1639; letter XXVIII, 33-5, 22 March 1639

<sup>183</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter XXVIII, 33-5, 22 March 1639

<sup>184</sup> Anselment, "Katherine Paston and Brilliana Harley", 434

<sup>185</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter XII, 9-11, 17 November 1638; letter XIII, 11-2, 24 November 1638

value.<sup>186</sup> Lady Brilliana derived spiritual comfort from her correspondence with her husband and son. In February 1640, she wrote to Edward 'I received your letter, which was a sweet refreshment to me'.<sup>187</sup> This comfort was not necessarily derived from the content of the letters; instead the act of reading and writing correspondence gave her spiritual comfort and were integrated into her domestic religious routine.

The comfort Brilliana received from her correspondence with Robert and Ned may have derived from the performance of her role as wife and mother. Some letters may not be overtly religious in content, however, when seen as means of performing relative religious duties, letters become the material site of that performance. In the exchange of letters among family and friends they performed their relative religious duties as spouses, parents, children, friends, patrons, clients, or kin. Lady Brilliana's letters to her son epitomise this. In their mix of concern for her son's wellbeing and guidance on religion, social behaviour, health, and academic studies Brilliana's letters show her performing the duty of a mother to nurture her offspring.<sup>188</sup> Her advice on religion, appropriate company, and social niceties, for instance, show her fashioning her son for his future role as a puritan patriarch. Letter-writing is the vehicle for projecting Brilliana's self-identity as godly mother. Her letters enabled Brilliana to continue to perform the domestic religious duties of a mother despite the physical distance.

The Harleys used their letters to bridge the distances between them in the act of family worship itself. On 30 November 1638 Brilliana wrote 'Dear Ned, if I could as easely convae mwself to you as my letters, I would not be so longe absent from you; but, sence I must waite for that comfort, I joy in this, that I assshure meself, your prayers and mine meete dayly at the

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<sup>186</sup> Morrissey and Wright, "Piety and sociability", 45

<sup>187</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter LXIII, 81, 10 February 1640; another example, letter CXVII, 129-30, 21 May 1641

<sup>188</sup> Anselment, "Katherine Paston and Brilliana Harley", passim



throne of grase.'<sup>189</sup> This concept of personal prayer performed at distance joining together before God is repeated frequently in their correspondence. Even more interesting are Lady Brilliana's attempts to maintain the communal religious circle of their ember week days of humiliation and fasting, on which more in the next chapter. In their correspondence Brilliana regularly reminded Edward about the ember week and encouraged him to join in remotely with their devotions. The first ember week Edward missed was in December 1638 and on 11 December Brilliana reminded him that it was approaching. She hoped that 'you will in desires be with us: and so our prayers, I hope, shall meete in heaven, before the Lord.'<sup>190</sup> Three days later she called upon Edward to remember how his father set the day apart and she hopes that this will cause him to have 'like affections to join with us'.<sup>191</sup> Edward heeded his mother's call as Brilliana expressed her joy that he set apart the same Wednesday and hopes that 'the Lord did hear us all'.<sup>192</sup> Brilliana conceptualised these simultaneous devotions as a refiguring of the household to encompass Edward despite his physical distance from Brampton; she wrote 'I was very glad you joyned with us in the ember weake'.<sup>193</sup> Instead of family, domestic, or household religion being bounded by physical space or proximity; the Harleys redefined the household in emotional or affective terms to include those spatially separated but emotionally joined. The letters are the means by which this redefinition of the household is achieved.

The close relationship between letter writing and the daily cycle of religious activity is demonstrated further by considering the timing of letter writing. Historian James Daybell emphasised the reactive and irregular nature of early modern correspondence but acknowledged the development of the practice of regular correspondence over the course of

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<sup>189</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter XIV, 13-4, 30 November 1638

<sup>190</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter XV, 14-5, 11 December 1638

<sup>191</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter XVI, 16-7, 14 December 1638

<sup>192</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter XX, 22-3, undated

<sup>193</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter XXIX, 36-7, 29 March 1639

the seventeenth century.<sup>194</sup> Lady Margaret Hoby recorded her letter writing in her diary and typically read and wrote letters in the early morning after private prayers and in the evening before bed.<sup>195</sup> This suggests a close relationship between her letter writing and other devotional activities taking place at the same time, such as Bible reading and prayer. Daybell believed the practice of corresponding with a spouse at the end of the day may have been fairly common.<sup>196</sup> Lady Brilliana's correspondence with Sir Robert hints that she used the time before bed to write to him and that this was intimately connected to her prayers also performed at this time. On 17 February 1626, Brilliana finished her letter with 'and with the beest duty I bide you Godnight'.<sup>197</sup> I have interpreted this as a reference to prayer suggesting that Lady Brilliana intends to follow her letter writing with prayers. This makes explicit the connection between letter writing and domestic religious practice.

It is significant that one of the principal means by which the community was united and their shared identity expressed was through correspondence composed and consumed in a domestic setting. The Harleys, and particularly Lady Brilliana, used their correspondence to articulate a distinctive puritan identity for the family and to negotiate their place within the godly community. This central aspect of godly piety and sociability is enacted and experienced in domestic space.

## Conclusion

In his chapter on reading in *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain*, Alec Ryrie wrote 'reading meant, first and last, reading the Bible'.<sup>198</sup> Ryrie, is of course absolutely correct to stress the importance of the Bible in Protestant piety. However, the focus on Protestantism as

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<sup>194</sup> James Daybell, *The Material Letter in Early Modern England*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 48

<sup>195</sup> Daybell, *The Material Letter*, 48, quoting *The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby*, 9, 11, 12, 28, 30, 39, 52, 53, 31, 32

<sup>196</sup> Daybell, *The Material Letter*, 48

<sup>197</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70110, 17 February 1626

<sup>198</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 270

a religion of the book, and the Bible in particular, has, to some extent, obscured the many interactions with books, manuscripts, and texts undertaken as part of daily domestic religious practice. Perhaps that is the reason for the strange lack of attention to devotional reading until relatively recently; the Bible was assumed to be so unique, so monolithic. Yet what recent research, and this chapter, has begun to tease out is an appreciation of the many and varied forms of religious reading and writing.

Another reason for lack of interest in devotional reading and writing could be its uncontroversial nature. Protestants of all stripes engaged in devotional reading and writing in some, or all of, the ways discussed. The examples deployed in this chapter generally hail from those with puritan tendencies. This is partly due to the archival sample used and the uneven survival of material. It is also due to the reflective nature of puritan piety. The desire to evaluate the soul and gain assurance of salvation inspired the creation of written documents as material evidence of devotion or assurance. The writing of personal and unique devotional texts would also have been more appealing and useful to Puritans than those who were more likely to turn to set forms in their devotions. However, the textual practices of the conforming Ferrar family of Little Gidding, whose domestic religious routine was based on the *Book of Common Prayer*, are an important reminder that this was a culture shared across the Protestant mainstream.<sup>199</sup>

By attending to reading and writing as acts or activities, rather than the genres consumed and produced, I have tried to foreground first their performance as intrinsically religious and devotional activities. That might be the classic Bible reading with commonplace book and pen at the ready, writing devotional poetry, or communal reading of the Protestant martyrologies as evening entertainment and edification. Secondly, I have tried to highlight

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<sup>199</sup> Paul Dyck, "'A New Kind of Printing': Cutting and Pasting a Book for a King at Little Gidding", *The Library*, 7th series, 9 no 3, (2008), 306-333.

the complex ways in which acts of reading and writing facilitate and enable the other practices of domestic religion. An illustrative journey through domestic religion highlights these transitions. The layman would have read in the Bible and other devotional literature, and written notes of key takeaways. He may have meditated on what he had read and wrote it down for future devotional use. Perhaps he then performed personal prayer, composing his prayer extemporarily using the inspiration of his meditation and the support of his commonplace book. The householder may have prepared a written prayer or notes for use in morning family prayer drawing on reading in a variety of devotional manuals, his own notes on the Bible and his meditation.

In addition to providing the vital link between domestic religious practices, acts of reading, and writing were also the means by which public religion was transitioned into the domestic space or vice versa. To take a real example this time: Lady Elizabeth Langham reportedly required her female servants to write an account of the sermons they heard in Church and 'used to help and supply their wants out of her own more exact notes'. Through multiple acts of reading and writing the sermon was transferred into domestic religious practice for both mistress and servants. Lady Elizabeth's eleven year old daughter was, by this means, able to 'analyze' a sermon of thirty or forty heads 'with most remarkable enlargements upon them'.<sup>200</sup> Public, made personal, made family.

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<sup>200</sup> Clarke, *Lives*, part II, 203, mentioned in Cliffe, *The Puritan Gentry in Early Stuart England*, 140

## Chapter 6: EXTRAORDINARY RELIGION

Thus far, this thesis has explored the ordinary practices of domestic religion; those which form part of the regular, usually daily, devotional cycle. The last two chapters will turn to extraordinary practices of domestic religion; those which are irregular, infrequent, and respond to special circumstances. This chapter will first discuss domestic devotions which relate to receiving the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. This chapter then explores fasting and days of humiliation and thanksgiving. Both aspects of this chapter are important, and well-documented, elements of the Harley and D'Ewes families' domestic religion.

Preparation for the Lord's Supper and days of humiliation and thanksgiving were both extraordinary occasions which brought together the diverse practices of domestic religion patterned in unique ways. These extraordinary practices are meta-practices encompassing other activities of devotion. As such they highlight the complexity of domestic religion; the many and varied ways that devotional activities can be linked together. Both meta-practices provided a focus and motivation to concentrate on devotional matters, in a way that lay people found helpful in managing the competing demands of spiritual, economic, social, and political life.

Both extraordinary activities also contribute to this thesis' consideration of the relationship and links between public and domestic religion. The Lord's Supper is usually considered as acts of public religion and of particular importance in religio-politics. Preparation for communion however was part of domestic religion and puts a new slant on the importance of the Lord's Supper to piety. The sacrament becomes the final public devotional act in a string of domestic devotions. Days of humiliation and fasting blur the boundaries of public and domestic religion in a different way. The officially proclaimed national fast days involved practices straddling home and church. Strictly domestic fast days took on the hue of public

religion from the identity of participants and the nature of the devotions. Here we approach the puritan conventicle and just what transformed conscientious domestic religion into an enthusiastic and potentially seditious conventicle.

Sacrament preparation and days of humiliation and fasting also challenge common assumptions about the interiorised nature of puritan piety. These meta-practices demonstrate the sociability of godly piety. In both sections, but particularly in relation to fasting, I pay close attention to the relationship between prescription and practice. The rich examples of lived experience allow an evaluation of the internalisation and adaptation of prescriptive guidance into practical performance. I also consider continuity and change in practice of humiliation and fasting in the Harley family. Days of humiliation and fasting played an important role in constructing and furthering the Harley family identity as part of the wider elect community.

### **Preparation for The Lord's Supper**

In contemporary and historical readings of styles of piety in the first half of the seventeenth century, the puritan style was centred solely on the word preached while the 'Laudian style' was focussed on public prayer and the sacraments.<sup>1</sup> Peter Lake coined the phrase Laudian style and used Laudian as a short hand for the establishment religious temper of the 1630s which he uses in preference to conformist, Arminian, or anti-Calvinist. Lake himself acknowledged the extent to which the image he presented was an ideal type more rounded or coherent than reality but useful nonetheless in delineating an overall style and tone. In doing so, Lake's analysis becomes useful over the longer period, with the Laudian style having relevance beyond the borders of the 1630s. The importance of the sacraments to Laudian writers is beyond doubt and, as Lake points out, many of the prominent elements of religious

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Lake, "The Laudian Style" in *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642*, ed. Kenneth Fincham, (London: Macmillan, 1993), 161-185

policy at this time, such as the moving and railing of communion tables altar-wise, supported these attitudes. I would also not deny the importance of preaching to the godly and the desire of the Laudians to regulate preaching.<sup>2</sup> However to translate these overarching trends to personal piety, for instance to deny the place the Lord's Supper held in the devotional practice of many Puritans, risks reducing piety to an internalising of policy.<sup>3</sup>

For Alec Ryrie the strong market for communion preparation handbooks suggests many Protestants took the duty of preparation seriously. While some divines recommended extended preparation, for most it began the day before the Communion.<sup>4</sup> Lewis Bayly recommended a thorough self-examination before the holy communion. Once the survey of sins and miseries is complete, he suggested, 'retire to some secret place' and make a tearful confession to God asking him for mercy and forgiveness. Bayly provided a template text for this confession with spaces and prompts to add personalised sins.<sup>5</sup> The Lord's Supper was a vital element in the piety of the puritan Sir Simonds D'Ewes; it was an activity which structured his domestic religion. He recorded the days when he received the sacrament and the preparations he made. On Saturday 26 October 1622, he spent the whole afternoon 'preparing for our blessed sacrament the day following'. On 12 April 1623 D'Ewes spent 'the evening in preparing for our blessed communion' and later that year on 25 October the whole 'Saturday tooke upp my greatest time in preparing to receive the sacrament the day following.' D'Ewes continued his preparation for the sacrament on the Sabbath morning, on 11 May 1623 he wrote 'noe sooner had I risen, but I pursued the preparation I had initiated.'<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Lake, "The Laudian Style", 170-171

<sup>3</sup> For instance, in his exploration of puritan piety J.T. Cliffe reduced the consideration of communion to conformity of gesture in the ceremony itself. Cliffe, *The Puritan Gentry in Early Stuart England*, 28-30

<sup>4</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 340-1

<sup>5</sup> Bayly, *The Practise of Pietie*, 718-732

<sup>6</sup> Bourcier, *The Diary of Sir Simonds D'Ewes*, 103, 130, 167, 135

Besides Bayly's guidance D'Ewes may also have been influenced by William Bradshaw's *A Preparation to the receiving of the Sacrament*, a copy of which he owned.<sup>7</sup> Bradshaw was a clerical non-conformist who nonetheless retained his ministry through the protection of godly patrons. He had been a prominent puritan polemicist but in later years focussed on edificatory works of a 'typically Calvinist world-view, stressing the importance of cohesion within the persecuted community of the godly elect'. He energetically refuted charges of separatism.<sup>8</sup> In that context penning a manual on preparing to receive the Lord's Supper was a significant statement. Bradshaw demonstrated why preparation for the sacrament is necessary 'showing what a dangerous sinne it is to receive this sacrament unworthily.'<sup>9</sup> To rush to partake of this mystery without preparation or irreverently is a brutish sin.<sup>10</sup> To partake unworthily is to be 'polluted and defiled thereby.'<sup>11</sup> Bradshaw described how Christians may worthily receive the sacrament. 'A diligent search and inquisition to bee made within our soules and consciences, whether we be such kind of persons as may be assured that the lord will bid welcome to this table' is required.<sup>12</sup> This search is for the saving graces of God which all proceed from a 'true, saving and justifying faith'.<sup>13</sup> D'Ewes' practise of extemporary prayer, self examination and religious fasting and humiliation, discussed later in this chapter, resembled Bradshaw's programme of preparation for the sacrament. It reminds us that self-examination was performed for many reasons. Self-examination is most often seen as a search for evidences of salvation in the face of God's eternal election but it is clear from D'Ewes' practice, that it was also a search for worthiness of the sacrament.

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<sup>7</sup> Watson, *The Library of Sir Simonds D'Ewes*, 186

<sup>8</sup> Victoria Gregory, "Bradshaw, William (bap. 1570, d. 1618)" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, Jan 2008, accessed 21 Jan 2017, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3205>

<sup>9</sup> William Bradshaw, *A Preparation to the receiving of the sacrament, of Christ's body and blood directing weake Christians how they may worthily receive the same*, (London: Printed by I.B., 1617), sig.B1r

<sup>10</sup> Bradshaw, *A Preparation to the receiving of the sacrament*, fols.4v, 9v-10r, 14v, 22r-23v

<sup>11</sup> Bradshaw, *A Preparation to the receiving of the sacrament*, fols.40v-41r, 50r

<sup>12</sup> Bradshaw, *A Preparation to the receiving of the sacrament* fols.55r-v

<sup>13</sup> Bradshaw, *A Preparation to the receiving of the sacrament*, fols.56r, 58v-59r, 60r, 63v, 68v



Ryrie notes it was the infrequency of communion that made this preparation 'possible and valuable'.<sup>14</sup> It is evident that D'Ewes considered receiving the sacrament as vital from the care he took in preparing for it. D'Ewes' diary 1622-1624 shows that he took communion regularly, on average about once every seven weeks; very frequent given the popular custom of receiving one-to-three times per year.<sup>15</sup> In a letter to his wife D'Ewes informed her that he would be delayed from returning to their home in Stow 'to spend the lords day and to comfort my weted spirits by partaking the Lordes Supper ther which I doubt our jolie preist at Stow will according to his impious custome, without respect either to authorities or religion make us strangers unto as long as we are in the cuntrie'.<sup>16</sup> Richard Danford, their minister at Stowlangtoft, was neglecting to perform the Lord's Supper often enough for D'Ewes' liking or he was excluding him through hostility. D'Ewes derived much spiritual comfort from the Lord's Supper. On 25 December 1622 he wrote 'this morning I was made a partaker of that glorious banquet in St Faiths church under Paules...and receaving it with a quiet minde, through mercye I receaved some comforte in it'.<sup>17</sup> On other occasions however D'Ewes was unhappy with his receiving of the sacrament. On 13 April 1623 his language speaks evocatively of his perceived unworthiness to receive: 'but oh! this wicked flesh of ours, neither spent I the day nor received I that, soe purelye and conscionably as I desired'. On these occasions D'Ewes relied on the mercy of God to 'accept the will for the deed'.<sup>18</sup> His despair at inadequate receiving show how central the sacrament was to D'Ewes' piety, for him it was no custom to be taken lightly.

The importance of the sacrament to D'Ewes' practise of piety calls into question the view that preaching was of the utmost importance to the Godly, to the *detriment* of the sacraments. The

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<sup>14</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 342

<sup>15</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 336

<sup>16</sup> British Library, London, Harley Manuscripts, 379, f.41, undated. The wife he was addressing was probably Anne

<sup>17</sup> Bourcier, *The Diary of Sir Simonds D'Ewes*, 110

<sup>18</sup> Bourcier, *The Diary of Sir Simonds D'Ewes*, 90, 135, 167, 178, 130

role of the Lord's Supper in D'Ewes' piety demonstrates the enmeshed nature of domestic and public religious devotion. D'Ewes prepared for the sacrament in his home, received it during public worship, and meditated on the comfort he derived from it in the domestic space once again. It could be seen as one practice spanning the domestic and public spheres of worship.

During the Interregnum, the Lord's Supper entered domestic space in a way it rarely had before or after. During this period Royalists and Church of England loyalists performed and received the sacrament in the home. The Anglican lay diarist John Evelyn recorded his response to the changes in public worship:

3d December 1654. Advent Sunday. There being no Office at the church but extemporary prayers after the Presbyterian way, for now all forms were prohibited, and most of the preachers were usurpers, I seldom went to church upon solemn feasts; but, either went to London, where some of the orthodox sequestered divines did privately use the Common Prayer, administer sacraments, etc., or else I procured one to officiate in my house; wherefore, on the xoth, Dr. Richard Owen, the sequestered minister of Eltham, preached to my family in my library, and gave us the Holy Communion.<sup>19</sup>

Post-Restoration most puritan gentry maintained their attendance at the Lords Supper in the parish. Few separated completely from the Church of England despite reservations about ceremonies and the terms of conformity. Many families like the Harleys and the Gells maintained attendance at parish services and communion despite their puritan piety. Families employed a number of different strategies to compromise between conformity and piety. Sir Edward Harley expended significant energy recruiting ministers who were excellent preachers for the livings he controlled, and particularly for Brampton Bryan as it was where the family attended public worship. As we have seen, the family also had an active domestic devotional life and close relationships with non-conformist ministers. The Gells held

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<sup>19</sup> John Evelyn (ed. William Bray), *The Diary of John Evelyn*, vol I, (London: M. W. Dunne, 1901) 302-3

conventicles at Hopton Hall yet remained constant in attendance at the Parish services despite what it reportedly cost their consciences.<sup>20</sup> This may be due to social and economic reasons; maintaining a role in local government and society demanded that. However, in the case of the Gells, with their conventicles, it seems they were motivated by a genuine desire to partake of the Lord's Supper with their community.

Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick, was described as a 'very devout communicant' and is an example of a late seventeenth century puritan for whom the Lord's Supper was an important structuring element to her domestic religious practice. In his memoir, Anthony Walker recalled her practice at length in order encourage others to her serious preparation of 'solemn fasting'.<sup>21</sup> In her diary, Rich recorded her preparations for receiving the Lord's Supper on 23 September 1666. On Thursday 20 September, she went into her wilderness 'to examine my own heart before the sacrament, what my condition was, and what sins I was guilty of' and went on to make a confession to God in her closet. On the Saturday, she read the scriptural chapters which instituted The Lord's Supper and this inspired a lengthy meditation on the sufferings of Christ. On the Sunday morning, Rich rose 'very early' and read in the Bible of St Peter's love for Christ which caused her to feel God's love 'with abundance of tears and meditate on the passion of Christ'. Rich received comfort and assurance of love in the sacrament. She concluded the day with further meditation on the privileges of God's children.<sup>22</sup>

In Rich's account the actual reception of the sacrament is a very small element and that there was much more time devoted to preparation and reflection domestically than to the act of public worship. It highlights how historians could usefully re-examine the labels given to different elements of religious practice and that practices like receiving communion cannot be

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<sup>20</sup> Cliffe, *The Puritan Gentry Besieged*, 84, 88-89

<sup>21</sup> Walker, *Memoir of Lady Warwick*, 30

<sup>22</sup> *Diary of Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick*, 83-5

considered purely public worship. The public worship of the Lord's Supper had complex connections to a range of domestic religious practices, including fasting, meditation, and self-examination.

### **Fasting and days of humiliation and thanksgiving**

Another aspect of household religion which brought together a range of devotional practices were days of humiliation and thanksgiving. These were special days of prayer to express communal contrition and thanks to God for afflictions and blessings. Days of humiliation in particular would usually include fasting.

Fasting as a practice in mainstream seventeenth century religious cultures has received relatively little attention from historians. Recently, however, fasting, both public and domestic, has featured in the work of Alex Ryrie.<sup>23</sup> For Ryrie the model of a true fast was consistent across the Protestant spectrum until 1640. That model was a twenty-four hour abstinence from food, work, recreation, fine clothing, music, and the marriage bed; as well as restricting sleep. A fast day was not, however, a fast day if not filled with communal and individual devotional exercises. It was 'a kind of mid-week Sabbath'.<sup>24</sup> Fasting and days of humiliation and repentance of which it formed a part, are evident in the prescribed and actual practice of household religion across seventeenth century denominational traditions. However, Ryrie overstated the degree of consensus surrounding fasting. Although this became more apparent after 1640, fasting always had the potential to cause debate and dissension.<sup>25</sup> Prescriptive authors disagreed on the nature and ideal practice of fasting and, in doing so, touched on fundamental points of controversy. The practice of fasting also became

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<sup>23</sup> Alec Ryrie, "The fall and rise of fasting in the British Reformation" in *Worship and the Parish Church in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Natalie Mears and Alec Ryrie, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013); Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 195-99

<sup>24</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 196

<sup>25</sup> John Spurr, "'Virtue, Religion and Government': The Anglican Uses of Providence" in *The politics of Religion in Restoration England*, ed. Tim Harris, Paul Seaward, and Mark Goldie (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 29-48. This discusses the days of fasting and thanksgiving held by post-restoration Anglicans in an attempt to extirpate the guilt of the Kingdom over the regicide.

implicated in the religio-political issues of the day; for example, the question over what constituted an illegal conventicle.

Fasting featured heavily in the lives of seventeenth century lay people. Public fast days were proclaimed in times of affliction, celebration, and memorial. This ensured its role in the religious culture and consciousness of the country.<sup>26</sup> The earliest English reformers had rejected what they saw as the Catholics' superstitious abuse of fasting, taking their lead from continental divines such as Martin Bucer who wrote, 'it is anti-Christian to prescribe fasting for Christians'.<sup>27</sup> By the 1550s, however, English Protestants established a scripturally sanctioned 'true and Christen faste'.<sup>28</sup> As the century progressed the authorities ordered public fasts as days of atonement to God following events such as a major plague epidemic in 1563 and after an earthquake in 1580.<sup>29</sup> Public fasting was not strongly associated with any one ecclesiastical or theological position. This is partly because the impetus for public fasting stemmed from a shared providentialist outlook.

By the later years of the sixteenth century prescriptive authors were also recommending private fasting as a valuable practice. Unofficial communal fasts were introduced by local ministers in response to local misfortunes. In enthusiastic areas, these could develop into elaborately structured religious meetings that formed a part of the voluntary religious activities that existed within the official church.<sup>30</sup> Fasting as a domestic religious activity was also recommended. Late Elizabethan public fasts required individuals to spend the remainder of the day maintaining their fast and engaging in devotional activities. While there was a

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<sup>26</sup> Christopher Durston, "'For the better humiliation of the people': Public Days of Fasting and Thanksgiving During the English Revolution", *Seventeenth Century*, 7, no 2, (1992): 129-49

<sup>27</sup> Graeme Murdock, *Beyond Calvin: The Intellectual, Political and Cultural World of Europe's Reformed Churches*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 109

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Becon, *A fruitful treatise of fasting wherein is declared what ye Christen fast is, how we ought to fast, what ye true use of fasting is*, (London: By Ihon Day, dwellyng ouer Aldersgate, 1551), preface

<sup>29</sup> Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 143

<sup>30</sup> Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, 147; Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society, 1559-1625*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 260-3

large amount of agreement about the value and nature of domestic fasting; some aspects, such as sermon gadding across ecclesiastical boundaries, were regarded with suspicion. This culminated in the 1604 Canons which outlawed fasts not authorised by the local bishop.<sup>31</sup> Many of the articles were part of an effort to contain puritan agitation for further reform, clerical non-conformity, and established the illegality of full or partial separation from the established church. Articles forbade ministers (and ‘any other persons’) to administer the communion in private houses, to appoint or be present at ‘publike or private fasts’ not licensed by law or by a bishop, and to ‘hold private conventicles’.<sup>32</sup> Canon 72 equated domestic communal fasting to ‘prophesies or exercises’. The 1593 Conventicle Act had outlawed attendance at ‘assemblies, conventicles, or meetings under colour or pretence of any exercise of religion’.<sup>33</sup> This ensured voluntary religious practices such as fasting were vulnerable to interpretation as illegal seditious conventicles by hostile observers.

Early seventeenth century writers on fasting, Nicholas Bownde and George Downame, were representative of a strictly Calvinist yet ecclesiastically consensual clerical milieu.<sup>34</sup> Their works appeared in 1604 and were inspired by a providentialist rationale for fasting. Bownde was prompted by the plague outbreak of that year as he believed fasting could help mitigate

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<sup>31</sup> Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, 147

<sup>32</sup> Church of England, *Constitutions and canons ecclesiasticall treated vpon by the Bishop of London, president of the conuocation for the prouince of Canterbury, and the rest of the bishops and clergie of the sayd prouince : and agreed vpon with the Kings Maiesties licence in their synode begun at London, anno Dom. 1603, and in the yeere of the raigne of Our Soueraigne Lord Iames, by the grace of God King of England, France, and Ireland the first, and of Scotland the 37 : and now published for the due obseruation of them by His Maiesties authoritie vnder the Great Seale of England*, (London: by Robert Barker, printer to the Kings most excellent Maiestie, 1604), f.C3v-C4r; f.I2r-v

<sup>33</sup> “The Act Against Puritans (1593), 35 Elizabeth, Cap. 1”, *Hanover Historical Texts Project*, accessed 10 March 2017, <http://history.hanover.edu/texts/ENGref/er86.html>; Patrick Collinson, “The English conventicle” in *Voluntary Religion, Studies in Church History* 23, ed. William J. Sheils and Diana Wood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 223–59, 230–32

<sup>34</sup> Kenneth L. Parker, “Bownde, Nicholas (d. 1613)”, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, Jan 2012, accessed 2 March 2017, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3084>. Bownde is perhaps best known as a sabbatarian. While his sabbatarianism was not shared equally by all clerics of the day; Bownde does represent what can be recognised as a Calvinist or Jacobean consensus, and in ecclesiology was, at least by the early seventeenth century, conformist. Kenneth Gibson, “Downham, George (d. 1634)”, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, accessed 2 March 2017, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7977>

God's chastisements, arouse God's mercy, and express thankfulness for that mercy.<sup>35</sup> Downname, meanwhile, framed his providentialist rationale for fasting in more general terms.<sup>36</sup> Fasting could be a means to suit God for some special benefit or mercy and equally to entreat him to remove some evil.<sup>37</sup> Historian Alexandra Walsham argued that 'providentialism underpinned co-ordinated religious responses to catastrophe', of which fasting was a large part.<sup>38</sup> Throughout the seventeenth century the practice of fasting continued to be understood in a providential framework across the religious spectrum. As different understandings of providence gave different possible meanings to fasting, providentialism, and the fasting it inspired could equally act as a 'catalyst of... discord and dissent.'<sup>39</sup>

Bownde and Downname accorded fasting an important role in the reconciliation between God and sinners. Fasting was an effective practice to humble and testify unfeigned repentance for sin.<sup>40</sup> The outward abstinence of fasting would further one in this inward virtue.<sup>41</sup> That fasting was implicated in salvation theology was also problematic given the divergence of opinion on salvation. Fasting had the particularly useful characteristic of amplifying other devotional practices. Bownde and Downname recommended fasting as a help to further the worship of God. Fasting itself was not worship of God but it made 'prayers more fervent and

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<sup>35</sup> Nicholas Bownde, *The holy exercise offasting Described largely and plainly out of the word of God: with all the parts and causes, and seuerall kinds of the same: together with the most fit times, and conuenient seasons, when and how long it should be held: with the manifold fruite and commoditie that redoundeth to vs thereby: and the whole nature and order thereof. In certaine homilies or sermons, for the benefit of all those, that with care and conscience intend at any time publikely or priuately to put in practise the same*, (Cambridge: Printed by Iohn Legat, printer to the Vniuersitie of Cambridge, 1604), fA3v, A6v, fA4v-5v

<sup>36</sup> George. Downname, *The Christians sanctuarie vvhetherinto being retired, he may safely be preserued in the midst of all dangers. Fit for all men to read at all times, especially for those that are exercised in the schoole of affliction, in the time of Gods present visitation. Described in two booke or treatises: I. Of the Christian exercise offasting. II. Of holy inuocation on Gods name*, (London: Printed by Adam Islip for Thomas Man, 1604), 16

<sup>37</sup> Downname, *The Christians sanctuarie*, 13-4

<sup>38</sup> Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, 166

<sup>39</sup> Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, 166

<sup>40</sup> Downname, *The Christians sanctuarie*, 15; Bownde, *The Holy Exercise of Fasting*, 33-4. Bownde, *The Holy Exercise of Fasting*, 6-7, 68. Downname, *The Christians sanctuarie*, 8; Bownde, *The Holy Exercise of Fasting*, 33-4

<sup>41</sup> Bownde, *The Holy Exercise of Fasting*, 62-3

effectuall'.<sup>42</sup> The feeling of want prompted by outward abstinence 'set a sharper edge upon our prayers' to make them more piercing and powerful enough to make it to God in heaven.<sup>43</sup> Fasting was firmly located within the matrix of religious worship and devotion; a recognisable, distinguishable domestic religious practice that was yet still indivisible from other practices.

Fasting consisted of two elements: the outward bodily exercise and the inward 'vertues and graces of the minde' without which the outward exercise is 'nothing worth'. The purpose of fasting was furtherance in humiliation, repentance, worship, and godliness. The outward aspects of religious fasting were abstinence 'for a time wholly from all the commodities and pleasures of this life', 'from al comforts of the body'. The principal outward observation was an utter and total abstaining from all kinds of food and drink from evening until evening. Bownde's true fast also included 'some forebearing at that time of sleepe', choosing plainer clothing and married persons were to 'absteine from the fellowship of one another, and from the mariage bedde'. All these outward exercises further humbled souls and increased the fervency of repentance. By reducing sleep and abstaining from the marriage bed it was also hoped the Christian would 'redeem that time', a common concern about making the best use of time in gaining assurance of salvation. The outward elements of fasting were to be accompanied by the inward exercises of self examination, meditation and prayer.<sup>44</sup>

Fasting was not an ordinary service of God, 'that which should be practised every day' Bownde wrote, but an 'extraordinarie' part of his worship and most fit for times of affliction and sorrow. Bownde condemned the practice of reserving fasting to times such as lent and the Ember weeks, as was done in times of 'poperie and ignorance', as this means failing to consider whether these be times of joy or sorrow. The duration of a fast should also reflect

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<sup>42</sup> Downname, *The Christians sanctuarie*, 9, 10; Bownde, *The Holy Exercise of Fasting*, 28-9

<sup>43</sup> Downname, *The Christians sanctuarie*, 111-2

<sup>44</sup> Bownde, *The Holy Exercise of Fasting*, 28, 30-1, 39-45, 56, 46, 63-92



the scale of the affliction or need for which it is being undertaken. However, Bownde did prescribe the very minimum duration: at least one whole day from one evening to the next.<sup>45</sup> Downname agreed that fasting should be for times of mourning ‘not at set and ordinarie times to be performed’ but only ‘as just occasion’ and ‘needful circumstances’ require.<sup>46</sup> Domestic fasts could involve either just ‘one person...one familie and household, or of some fewe private persons in one family, or out of divers’.<sup>47</sup> For Bownde, it was particularly important that there should be fasting in families and households, including the servants, and the householder is responsible for ensuring this.<sup>48</sup>

If the authorities neglected their duty and failed to decree a public fast at times of public necessity then the godly should hold fasts in private. Downname recommended this even if it meant actively disobeying the authorities as he wrote ‘they are to use this exercise privately and secretly’.<sup>49</sup> Even in 1604, Bownde shows an appreciation of the divisive potential of domestic fasting. He writes ‘For though we may not disorderly undertake, and set up publike fasts in our churches upon our owne private motion...yet it if any dot it privatelie, when there is cause, it shalbe...no offence to any.’<sup>50</sup> Bownde distinguished between the unauthorized fasts held by groups in churches that had been drawing the ire of Archbishop Bancroft and the fasts confined to domestic dwellings.<sup>51</sup> Even these fasts would soon come to be regarded as suspect.

Henry Mason’s *Christian Humiliation, or, a Treatise of Fasting* (1625) should be read in the context of the rise of, and reaction to, Arminianism in the 1620s; the power struggle for the

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<sup>45</sup> Bownde, *The Holy Exercise of Fasting*, 168-85, 189-91, 193

<sup>46</sup> Downname, *The Christians sanctuarie*, 10, 11, 13

<sup>47</sup> Bownde, *The Holy Exercise of Fasting*, 210, 233

<sup>48</sup> Bownde, *The Holy Exercise of Fasting*, 234-6

<sup>49</sup> Downname, *The Christians sanctuarie*, 17; Bownde, *The Holy Exercise of Fasting*, 212-3

<sup>50</sup> Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, 146; Bownde, *The Holy Exercise of Fasting*, 226-7

<sup>51</sup> C. Durston, ““For the better humiliation of the people”: Public Days of Fasting and Thanksgiving During the English Revolution”, *Seventeenth Century*, 7, no 2 (1992): 130

doctrinal and cultural ‘soul’ of the Church of England.<sup>52</sup> Mason was an important clerical figure within English Arminianism and this treatise was one in a series that he published between 1624 and 1634 in which he distanced the Church of England from both Roman Catholic and Calvinist doctrines. His works were influential and frequently reprinted up to 1656.<sup>53</sup> Mason claimed he was inspired to commend fasting after investigating its nature and properties and finding it both pleasing to God and profitable to men. However the true reason was likely more defensive, for Mason acknowledged the censure he received for his opinions on fasting. Coupled with an appeal to the authority of the scriptures, the church fathers, and the primitive churches; it is clear that this treatise is framed in the context of debate. Mason’s polemical position is also revealed by the claim to have the approval of the current Church of England described as the ‘purest and best reformed church in Europe’.<sup>54</sup> While he sought to distance himself, and the Church of England, from Puritanism he also acted as an apologist for the Reformation in England, and on more than one occasion demonstrated why his model of fasting is better than ‘papist’ fasting.<sup>55</sup>

Mason’s arguments in favour of fasting differ little from the earlier writers, however, there are subtle differences in emphasis in his position. He recommended fasting before the public service of God in church and particularly before the Lord’s Supper: we respect and reverence God if we ‘first come to receive Christs body at the Lords Table, before wee relish any

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<sup>52</sup> Henry Mason, *Christian Humiliation, or, The Christians Fast. Treatise declaring the Nature, Kindes, Ends, Uses, and Properties of a Religious Fast: Together with a briefe Discourse concerning the Fast of Lent, Second Edition*, (London: Printed by M. Flesher for Iohn Clarke, 1627)

<sup>53</sup> J. D. Alsop, “Mason, Henry (1575/6–1647)” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, accessed 2 March 2017, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18274>. Henry Mason was born in 1575 or 1576 to a minor tradesman in Wigan, Lancashire. He attended Corpus Christi College, Oxford, proceeding BD in 1601 after which he served as a Church of England clergyman in Middlesex and London. While at Corpus Christi he was part of the college’s attempt to learn the contents of the university’s response to the millenary petition before it was published in 1603 and in this his biographer detects signs of his later anti-puritan commitment. He died in 1647.

<sup>54</sup> Mason, *Christian Humiliation*, ff. A2r-A3v

<sup>55</sup> For example: 55-7. Mason claims a true fast as practiced in the Church of England is an afflicting fast. A Roman Catholic fast, where meat is foreborn yet any amount of other food may be consumed is not an affliction and, according to Mason, is therefore a mock fast.

worldly nourishment.’<sup>56</sup> This should be seen in the context of the Arminian attempt to refocus lay piety on the celebration of The Lord's Supper. By recommending fasting as a discipline of mortification, Mason condemns those who ‘conceit all such austerity to be Monkish, and superstitious and ungodly.’ He accused Puritans of failing to promote fasting due to their fear of committing idolatry and encouraging superstitious abuses. Mason conceptualised fasting as a penal chastisement for sins, which chastisements are ‘more effectuell then those which God doth lay upon us’ for repentance. This human agency in repentance and salvation is a clear step away from double predestination. Mason also claimed that a true fast was joined with the practice of ‘good works’ and a holy life.<sup>57</sup> The phrase ‘good works’ itself was tied up in debates over the nature of true salvation and was therefore an emotive phrase indicative of Mason’s disregard for godly sensibilities.

Contemporaries were sensitive to Mason's less-than-strictly Calvinist attitude to salvation. In the second edition of the treatise a footnote clarified the statement that there were only two ways to salvation; an addition prompted by ‘some who except against it, because (as they say) I seeme to exclude Faith, without which it is impossible to please God’. Mason’s defence is that faith is requisite for repentance and is therefore included when he names repentance as the way to eternal life.<sup>58</sup> This example shows how fasting, a seemingly innocuous practice recommended by all and for similar reasons, could become implicated in debates over keystone issues such as salvation and predestination.

Mason also recommended ordinary fasting as a usual exercise of the soul for no special reason. For him there was no good argument against ‘set and ordinary fasts’; and set and standing days for public and private fasting were lawful, expedient, and beneficial. He defended ordinary fasts against ‘some later Divines, who dispute and determine against the

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<sup>56</sup> Mason, *Christian Humiliation*, 25

<sup>57</sup> Mason, *Christian Humiliation*, 31, 45-6, 63

<sup>58</sup> Mason, *Christian Humiliation*, 3

use of them' by appealing to scripture, example of the church, and reason. By contrast Mason was not prepared to prescribe set hours and durations for the practice of fasting, instead he suggested either a forebearing of 'dinner until evening or of supper until dinner time the next day; or else, of both of them together'. His circumspection is explained by his belief that extended fasting is not absolutely defined anywhere in the Bible or writings of the early church fathers. Mason also criticised the Roman Catholic church for breaking their fast at the usual time of eating, keeping in essence no fast at all.<sup>59</sup> Mason positioned himself as the moderate position between the two extremes of puritan excess and popish laxity.

While fasting could cause debate, in the mid-1620s it was not a definitive hall-mark of religious allegiance. Authors from all religious backgrounds promoted fasting and ordinary people took their lead from divines across the religious spectrum. Mason's programme was still essentially the same programme of personal and household fasting that earlier Jacobean Calvinists advocated. Lay contemporaries probably discerned little difference between Bownde and Mason in the fundamentals that really mattered to them: reasons for fasting and the actions of the day. The puritan Sir Simonds D'Ewes endorsed Mason's programme. Given his strong awareness of the religious and political situation, it is inconceivable that he would have been unaware of Henry Mason's Arminian position, yet he read and drew inspiration from Mason's work.

D'Ewes wrote in his autobiography that he was persuaded by 'a verie learned solid discourse of fasting it selfe, penned by Mr Henry Mason...that Christians ought to sett some times aparte for ther ordinarie humiliacion and fasting'. D'Ewes claimed that hitherto he had refrained from private fasting 'by reason of the papists superstitious abuse of it'.<sup>60</sup> Godly conversation, Mason's treatise, and the benefits that D'Ewes discovered in fasting caused

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<sup>59</sup> Mason, *Christian Humiliation*, 18-22, 126, 127-8, 19-21, 142, 143, 144, 147

<sup>60</sup> Bourcier, *The Diary of Sir Simonds D'Ewes*, 104

him to observe Mason's 'rule' and he intended to continue doing so 'to the end of my life'.<sup>61</sup> However, D'Ewes qualified this with 'yet did I varie the times and duracion of my fasting' which demonstrates awareness that Mason's set times and durations for fasting were contested. To begin with D'Ewes held fast days twice every five weeks, then once a month, and finally at least once a quarter.

Reducing the frequency of his fasts coincided with completing his written assurance of the 'markes and signes of my assurance'. D'Ewes found personal fasting helpful in framing an evidence of his assurance of salvation and a catalogue of his sins. To his 'inestimate comforte' he finished his assurance in both English and Latin, and composed an elaborate preface in Latin. This took him sixty days of fasting after which he continued to fast once every three months, spending the day in the performance of 'religious duties of severall sortes'.<sup>62</sup> He internalised the tenet that fasting is only valuable in so far as it is used to further holy duties and examination of the conscience. Following Mason, D'Ewes used fasting as preparation for the Lord's Supper. However most of his fasting was structured around self-examination and a quest to gain assurance of his salvation not emphasised in Mason's treatise. D'Ewes followed Mason's programme but subverted it to his own devotional priorities and structures of piety.

D'Ewes also varied the duration of his fasts. Initially he 'tooke some little food about three of the clocke in the afternoone', however, for many years he had abstained from food until six in the evening and spent eight or nine hours in the performance of religious duties.<sup>63</sup> While the divines wrote that no Christian should fast beyond his strength and ability, they took little account of the realities of having a whole household fasting at once.<sup>64</sup> The running of a

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<sup>61</sup> Bourcier, *The Diary of Sir Simonds D'Ewes*, 104-5

<sup>62</sup> Bourcier, *The Diary of Sir Simonds D'Ewes*, 105

<sup>63</sup> Bourcier, *The Diary of Sir Simonds D'Ewes*, 105

<sup>64</sup> Mason, *Christian Humiliation*, 53, 148

household and the exigencies of life could make fasting impractical. Even committed fasters, such as D'Ewes, would adapt their fasting programme according to the demands of life. On 2 April 1634, for example, the family held a religious fast and humiliation day 'yet my wife being with child tooke some small sustenance; soe as it was in her a religious abstinence'.<sup>65</sup> They struck a compromise between the observance of religious duty and Anne's and the child's health. The Harleys took the same pragmatic approach. Thomas Pierson issued Lady Brilliana Harley a licence dated 14 March 1632 to 'eate flesh on fast days, in reason of her greate weakness'.<sup>66</sup>

According to D'Ewes' autobiography, 27 February 1630 was the first domestic fast he led with his 'whole companie' in attendance. D'Ewes clearly established the legal status of his practice when he wrote that family fasting was 'neither repugnant to the lawes of the commonwealth nor of the church.' The true significance of this assertion is revealed by reference to D'Ewes' claim 'yet did I forbear to bee present at anie fast where divers families mett except...when a fast was enjoined by the authoritie of the magistrate.' A marginal note explains that meetings of several families to fast was forbidden by a canon 'and divers godly Christians had been thereupon molested and grievously censured in the high commission'.<sup>67</sup> D'Ewes was concerned to establish his conformity and adherence to ecclesiastical and civil law. The autobiography was composed in 1638, however, and I would argue that it speaks more to the situation regarding fast days and their vulnerability to accusations of illegal conventicles in the more repressive atmosphere of the later 1630s than any ambiguity over the legality of communal fasting in 1630.

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<sup>65</sup> British Library, London, Harley Manuscripts, 646, f.159

<sup>66</sup> Lewis, *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, xlviii, notes to the introduction

<sup>67</sup> British Library, London, Harley Manuscripts, 646, f.126v, f.105

The divisive potential of fasting became apparent during the 1630s. Charles' proclamation of a fast to stave off the plague in 1636 was accompanied by instructions that ministers should not detain their congregations 'any longer time together to heare either Sermons or other divine service' or to celebrate the fast in any other way. This fast was described as a 'dumb fast and a mock fast' by discontented Puritans.<sup>68</sup> Archbishop Laud was personally hostile to fasting and considered it to be an 'ill custom'.<sup>69</sup> As domestic fasting was, by this point, more identified with puritan piety and therefore those who were most opposed to the religious policies of the king; it is unsurprising that the Arminian or Laudian clerics of the 1630s were hostile to and suspicious of the practice.

Evidence abounds for domestic fasting in the 1630s, including several ministers who were reported to the authorities, the practice of the D'Ewes family, and the domestic practice of the Harley family.<sup>70</sup> A glimpse of how important domestic fasting was to Puritans in the 1630s, and how their fasts were vulnerable to accusations of being seditious conventicles, surfaces in Robert Harley's papers prepared for the short parliament in 1640. Prominent on his list of grievances was the punishment of Christians gathering to fast and pray on the grounds they were taking part in conventicles.<sup>71</sup> The experience of this decade had a lasting impact on the godly and heightened their sense of identity and community. Tom Webster ascribed fasting, and the godly conference that often accompanied it, an important role in this process. In the 1630s, fasting for fellow Puritans falling foul of the authorities heightened their perception of themselves as an embattled elect minority who were recognisably set apart from the

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<sup>68</sup> Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, 164; Christopher Durston, "'For the better humiliation of the people": Public Days of Fasting and Thanksgiving During the English Revolution', *Seventeenth Century*, 7, no 2, (1992): 131

<sup>69</sup> Ryrie, "The Fall and Rise of Fasting in the British Reformations", 100

<sup>70</sup> Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, 165-6; Durston, "For the better humiliation", 132

<sup>71</sup> Cliffe, *The Puritan Gentry*, 215

unregenerate masses.<sup>72</sup> Communal fasting created space for godly sociability, enacting and structuring the godly community through the performance of godly identity.

The Brampton Bryan minister Thomas Pierson is credited, in his post-Restoration godly life, with instituting the practice of fasting in the Harley family and the parish.<sup>73</sup> There is no mention of fasting in the archive before Pierson's appointment to the living, yet from the 1620s to the early 1640s, the Harley manuscripts are peppered with references to fast days. These fast day references are most often made in connection with ember weeks. By tying themselves to quarterly ember weeks for their fasts, the Harleys were engaging with the traditional devotional calendar of the church. Given their Puritanism, this is surprising. Nicholas Bownde condemned the Catholic practise of seasonal fasting, including lent and ember days, as superstitious, hypocritically hollow, and 'altogether void of the right manner of fasting'.<sup>74</sup> Ryrie highlighted the tension inherent in prescriptive advice on fasts. He wrote that the distinction between 'good Protestant fasting', which was an ad hoc response to sin or necessity, and 'bad Catholic fasting which was conducted according to a set calendar' made limited sense and broke down in the seventeenth century. Prescriptive authors and laypeople adopted a practical approach with set times for personal and domestic fasting.<sup>75</sup> Like D'Ewes' use of set times for fasting the Harleys seem to have used the ember weeks as convenient times to ensure regular engagement in the practice. At no point do the Harleys ascribe any saving merit to their fasting or any value beyond the opportunity to express their humiliation and thanksgiving to God.

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<sup>72</sup> Tom Webster, "Early Stuart Puritanism" in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, ed. John Coffey and Paul C H Lim, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 48-66. 61

<sup>73</sup> J. Eales, "Thomas Pierson and the transmission of the moderate puritan tradition", *Midland History*, 20 (1995): 75-102; Jacqueline Eales, "Pierson, Thomas (c.1573-1633)", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, Jan 2008, accessed 3 March 2017, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/40535>; Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads*, 58-60 discusses Harley fasting

<sup>74</sup> Bownde, *The Holy Exercise of Fasting*, 37

<sup>75</sup> Ryrie, "The Fall and Rise of Fasting in the British Reformations", 100-1



In March 1626, Lady Brilliana Harley informed her husband Sir Robert by letter ‘on Wednesday last was a day in the Imber weake on which day we did remember to pray for the good sugses of the parlament and I did not forget to pray for you.’<sup>76</sup> Once Edward Harley went up to Oxford in 1638, Lady Brilliana wrote to him regularly we can see how careful the Harleys were to observe the ember weeks with fasting. She rarely failed to remind Edward of the approaching ember day and encourage him to observe it. On one occasion she wrote ‘The ember weaken owe drawes on a pase. I wisch you and your tutor weare here then; howsoever I hope, you will in desires be with us: and so our prayers, I hope, shall meete in heaven, before the lord.’<sup>77</sup> Only a couple of days later she reminds him again ‘I hope in a speciall maner, we shall remember you at the fast; and, deare Ned, thinke upon that day, howe your father is used to spend it, that so you may have like affections to joyne with us. Let your desire be oftner presented before your god that day; and the Lord, whoo only heares prayers heare us all.’<sup>78</sup> Edward's sister, also called Brilliana, also wrote reminding her brother about fasting: ‘My lady commanded me to tell you that she beseeches you not to forget the Ember week’.<sup>79</sup>

Importantly, the Harleys did not only observe the set ember day fasts but also held other extraordinary days of communal prayer and fasting, referred to variously as days of humiliation, ‘a privet day’ or a fast in the house. Lady Brilliana typically was careful to keep her son Edward abreast of fast days. On 2 Februrary 1639, she informed him ‘we shall have a privet day the next weake, when I trust, we shall remember you.’ It was gratifying to her that Edward also held fasts; she wrote with pride the following week ‘I much rejoyce that our hatsr did so neere meet that you in one weake and we in another sought the Lord’. Lady Brilliana

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<sup>76</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70110, f.12, 3 March 1626

<sup>77</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter XV, 14-5, 11 December 1638

<sup>78</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter XVI, 16-17, 14 December 1638

<sup>79</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70002, f.266, 21 February 1640

indicated that Edward's brothers, Robert and Thomas, and his sister Brilliana joined in.<sup>80</sup> This domestic fast day and the people involved is verified by a letter from Edward's brother, Robert, the same day saying 'My father on whenseday last kept a fast in the house and I unworthy to be at it was at it.'<sup>81</sup> Other participants in the Harleys fasts included their ministers and other likeminded clerical and lay associates. In January 1641, 'Mr. Gower, Mr. Yaits, Mr. Stevenson, Mr. Voile and Mr. More' were at their recent 'privet day'.<sup>82</sup> Lady Brilliana had to regularly excuse herself from fasting on account of ill-health; her pleasure in reporting when she was able to take part indicates its importance, she considered fasting to be 'a spiritual feast'.<sup>83</sup> It was this opening up of domestic fasting to co-religionists which gave their fast practices a potentially seditious character to unfriendly observers. In 1638 Sir Robert Harley and Stanley Gower were accused of holding unauthorised fasts.<sup>84</sup>

In a March 1640 letter to her son Edward, Lady Brilliana acted with a circumspection that hints at the vulnerability that the Harleys felt about their fasting practices. She wrote 'on tusday next, if pleas God, your father will keep a day; I beleeve you understand what day I meane.'<sup>85</sup> While by mid-1642 the Harleys did not have to fear the church authorities, they did, however, fear the royalist armies controlling Herefordshire. In a threatening atmosphere, Stanley Gower thought it prudent to hold the ember day fast domestically and reported to Sir Robert on September 23 1642 'we have lately held our quarter fast day, and to prevent any inconviency we kept it in privet in the castle, having there a good company of strangers well affected.'<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter XXIII, 28, 2 February 1639, letter XXIV, 28-9, 8 February 1639

<sup>81</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70119, Robert Harley to his brother Edward Harley, 8 February 1638/9

<sup>82</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter XCIII, 108, 8 January 1641

<sup>83</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter LXXVII, 93-5, 9 May 1640

<sup>84</sup> Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads*, 57-8

<sup>85</sup> Cliffe, *The Puritan Gentry*, 215

<sup>86</sup> Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Fourteenth Report, Appendix II, The Manuscripts of His Grace the Duke of Portland*, 99, Stanley Gower to Sir Robert Harley, 23 September 1642

Sir Robert's prayer notes confirm the practice of days of fasting, humiliation, and thanksgiving in the 1630s and provide an insight into the content of these devotions. The notes list of subjects to pray for, confessions to own, blessings to give thanksgiving for, and biblical references to incorporate into prayer. I have explored what these notes tell us about the Harleys practice of prayer in an earlier chapter. Jacqueline Eales has referred to these notes as survivals of the fast meetings at Brampton Bryan. Eales reveals their distinctly anti-Catholic and anti-Arminian attitudes as well as the politicised nature of these fast days at which the Harleys clearly figured themselves as members of an embattled and threatened Godly elite.<sup>87</sup> The Harleys family fast practices played a vital role in constructing and consolidating their family religious identity as members of the godly community. This perhaps explains the concern for fast days displayed in the family correspondence. In addition to the care Lady Brilliana took to inform her son Edward of the upcoming family fast days, she also delayed her daughter Brilliana's departure for London to live with Lady Mary Vere in April 1642 due to an upcoming fast. She wrote to Edward 'becaus of the fast of the next weake I am desirous she shoulde stay till that be past'.<sup>88</sup> Her childrens presence at family fast days was highly desirable, I believe, because of the importance of domestic fasting to Harley family identity.

Post-Restoration prescriptive works on fasting by moderate Puritans were rare. In their desire to present themselves in as conformist light as possible, in the hope of achieving comprehension within the national church, they avoided highlighting aspects of their piety, such as fasting, which could be interpreted in a separatist light. Domestic fasting, as we have seen before, was vulnerable to accusations of being a conventicle. In light of the increasingly harsh Conventicle Acts of 1664 and 1670 puritan writers did not want to reinforce this association by recommending domestic communal fasting. Nonetheless, domestic fasting

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<sup>87</sup> Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads*, 59

<sup>88</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, letter CXLIV, 153, 22 April 1642

remained an important part of the family religion that was so vital to the godly laity. The practice of the Foley and Harley families at Witley Court and Brampton Bryan respectively, the family religion of the non-conformist cleric John Rastrick, and the fasting recorded in the diary of Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick are evidence of this.<sup>89</sup> Fasting is an excellent example of later continuities with early seventeenth century practices.

One of the sets of notes composed in preparation for a Harley family day of fasting and humiliation has been preserved among the papers of Sir Robert Harley but were, I believe, composed and used by his son Sir Edward Harley. Firstly, the handwriting differs somewhat from the writing in the other sets of notes. While this is not conclusive the content of the 'Remembrances for prayer' support my conclusion.<sup>90</sup> Firstly it mentions prayers 'For Sir Robert for ye sanctifying of afflictions' as well as 'Mr Thomas Harley His wife and children' and prayers for the master and 'for his lady yr god would graciously spare her life and give a safe delivery of ye child.' The reference to Sir Robert could be to either Sir Edward's father, who suffered with ill-health throughout the 1650s to his death in 1656, or to his brother, who suffered serious illness in the 1660s. Thomas Harley, Sir Edward's brother, married before 1660 and had children by the latest of 1667. Sir Robert the elder never remarried following Brilliana's death in 1643 and as Thomas Harley was not married before this date, the master and his wife expecting a child must be Sir Edward and either Mary Button, who he married in 1654, or Abigail Stephens, who he married in 1661. The dating of these notes must be before 1671 as prayers are to be given for 'aged Lady Vere' who died in this year. This would narrow the potential date of the notes to 1654-1656 or 1661-1671.

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<sup>89</sup> Cliffe, *The Puritan Gentry Beseiged*, 141; Andrew Cambers, Michelle Wolfe, "Reading, Family Religion, and Evangelical Identity in Late Stuart England", *The Historical Journal*, 47, no 4, (2004): 885; *Diary of Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick*, 111, 16 May 1667

<sup>90</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70089, Misc.93.2, 'Remembrances for prayer'

The dating of these notes and their provenance as Sir Edward's is significant as archival evidence for the continued practice of fasting in Sir Edward's family is thin on the ground. Mary Harley wrote to her husband assuring him 'the duty as you desired of the fast was this day performed' and this must date from before 1656 as she also writes 'the other of prayer every second Thursday shall be, if god pleas – it being your fathers command as well as yours.'<sup>91</sup> Sir Edward's wife and daughters repeatedly wrote expressing concern that his fasts were of long duration and affected his health.<sup>92</sup> This could suggest that, while Sir Edward continued the practices of his youth, the rest of the family did not join in.

For the rest of the century, there are many references to days of prayer and days spent in supplication but fasting at these events is not directly referred to. In 1667 Sir Edward put his wife in mind of 'a former motion for days of pray' and in the final decades of the century, the Harley correspondence discusses communal days of 'serious and humble supplications to ye god of compation' on the occasion of illness in the family.<sup>93</sup> The Harley family continued in the post-Restoration period to view current events as examples of God's providence. They spent, for example, 11 December 1689 'in prayer for this familey & this poor nacion; I trust god will hear prayers that this nacion may not go into confusion; god that hath delivered us I trust will not lesen his goodness to us'.<sup>94</sup> While there are no direct references to fasting these clues suggest a consistent use of extraordinary days of humiliation and thanksgiving and it seems likely that fasting would have continued to feature. In the context of oscillating post-Restoration religious policy, the Harleys were acting with circumspection by not explicitly

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<sup>91</sup> Lewis, *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, 219, Mary Harley to her Husband Colonel Edward Harley, 16 September

<sup>92</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscript, 70114, Sarah Foley to Sir Edward Harley, 17 March 1693/4; 70115, Lady Abigail Harley to Sir Edward Harley, 13 February 1673 'but I wishe you may get no harm by disorderly howres especially I pray fast not too long'; Lady Abigail Harley to Sir Edward Harley, 29 October 1680 'for I beleve your long fasting is destructive to yr health'.

<sup>93</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70128, Sir Edward Harley to Lady Abigail Harley, December 3 1667; 70114, Sarah Foley to Sir Edward Harley, 1 June 1697, 29 June 1697

<sup>94</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70118, Elizabeth Harley to Sir Edward Harley, 12 December 1689

referring to fasting in their correspondence. Sir Edward did feel vulnerable in terms of his religious and political reputation in the post-restoration period. He wrote to Clarendon in 1665 defending himself against accusations of disaffection and disloyalty; significantly among his denials was ‘nor hath there been in my family any factious or unlawful meetings.’<sup>95</sup> Another possible hint of their caution about these days of prayer is a reference in a letter from Edward Harley to his father Sir Edward Harley to a part-day of prayer with Mr Nelson, their minister, being postponed due to ‘company coming in’.<sup>96</sup>

During the interregnum and post-Restoration fasting became a more important practice for conformists and Anglicans. Jeremy Taylor included a section on fasting in *The rule and exercises of holy living*, which appealed mainly to Anglicans, as well as peppering the rest of his text with recommendations of the practice. Taylor advised that fasting can be helpful in three ways: prayer, repentance, and the mortification of bodily lusts.<sup>97</sup> In Taylor’s conception of fasting for repentance, fasting clearly retains its important place in salvation. Gone, however, is the Calvinist doctrine of predestination and instead of effectual repentance aided by fasting being a sign of one’s election, it is now instrumental in salvation. For Taylor, repentance changes a whole man from sin to grace and therefore from damnation to salvation.<sup>98</sup> Repentance is now a process, penitence for past sins as well as an ongoing forsaking of sin.<sup>99</sup> While the practice of fasting had altered little since Bownde, the set of assumptions and understandings governing it changed wholesale.

Taylor was joined in his promotion of fasting to interregnum Anglicans by Richard Allestree, the not-so-anonymous author of the bestselling *The Whole Duty of Man*. It was a wide

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<sup>95</sup> Lewis, *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, 240-2, Letter from Sir Edward Harley to the Lord Chancellor Clarendon, 12 December 1665

<sup>96</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70118, Edward Harley to Sir Edward Harley, 10 April 1694

<sup>97</sup> Taylor, *The rule and exercises of holy living*, 266

<sup>98</sup> Taylor, *The rule and exercises of holy living*, 332-3

<sup>99</sup> Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England*, 291

ranging text, yet fasting appears at a number of important junctures: expressing reverence to God, the duty of repentance, and the preservation of chastity.<sup>100</sup> Allestree includes ‘hallowing of the times, set apart for his service’ among a long list of ways in which the ordinary Christian could express and display his reverence for God and along with the Lord’s Day and feast days, ‘dayes of fasting and humiliation’ were included in these set times.<sup>101</sup> Good Christians are to observe all the days of this sort enjoined by the church, whether at set times of the year or upon special occasions, and are to do so in the manner directed by the church. This should not only be abstaining from meat, but also afflicting and humbling the soul for individual and collective sins, entreating God with prayers for forgiveness and release from judgement, and turning from our sins to works of mercy.<sup>102</sup> This concentration on the ecclesiastically ordained fast days to the exclusion of voluntary domestic fast days is a reflection of Allestree’s devotional and clerical background; the Anglican emphasis of public over private devotion.

The post-Restoration Church of England emerged with a distinct doctrinal, ecclesiological, and spiritual identity; and its piety and sensibilities were shaped by its experiences during the 1640 and 1650s.<sup>103</sup> Those experiences infused Anglican spirituality with a sombre penitential mood. Charles I’s execution was seen as God’s judgement upon the nation for its sins. The historian John Spurr highlights Anglican providentialism in this period. While post-Restoration Anglicans did not share the strong connection between providence and individual salvation that their puritan neighbours did, that is not to say their belief and use of providence was not heartfelt or effective. Personal piety had a role in redeeming the nation's personal piety and many Anglican churchmen saw the restoration as an opportunity to promote a new

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<sup>100</sup> Allestree, *The Whole Duty of Man*, 50-1, 132-4, 173

<sup>101</sup> Allestree, *The Whole Duty of Man*, 47, 50

<sup>102</sup> Allestree, *The Whole Duty of Man* The whole duty of man, 50-1

<sup>103</sup> Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England*, xiv; Tim Harris, “Introduction” in *The Politics of Religion in Restoration England*, ed. Tim Harris, Paul Seaward, and Mark Goldie (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 16

morality and high standard of personal piety among conformists. Morality was primarily defined as obedience to God, God's church, and the King.<sup>104</sup> Fasting had a part to play in the pursuit of increased personal morality and was instrumental in the celebration of two new days of commemoration.

The restoration saw the return of the Anglican ecclesiastical calendar and a day of remembrance and humiliation on 30 January, the anniversary of the regicide, and a joyous day of thanksgiving on 29 May for Charles II's restoration were added.<sup>105</sup> Fasting was also part of the days of humiliation and thanksgiving appointed in *ad hoc* response to plague, fire, war, and rebellion. These days were acts of contrition and grateful acknowledgement of God's intervention in the affairs of the nation. In using the ideology and language of providence, the Restoration Church of England sought to sustain virtue, religion, and government.<sup>106</sup> From the providences of God, the individual was to infer the necessity of turning from sin and toward a life of holiness and morality. Crucially, orthodoxy in religion and political quiescence was a prerequisite for morality.<sup>107</sup> Fast days, whether they be annual days of commemoration or in response to contemporary events were an excellent occasion on which to emphasise the message of personal morality and amendment of life.

## Conclusion

Preparation for the Lord's Supper and days of fasting and humiliation have proven to be vital nodes in domestic religion pulling together the component practices in complex ways. I have described preparation for communion and days of humiliation as meta-practices. They link together separate individual and communal devotional activities into one practice.

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<sup>104</sup> Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England*, 20-22, 30, 239-241; Spurr, "Virtue, Religion and Government", 32-4

<sup>105</sup> Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England*, 241; David Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England*, (California: University of California Press, 1989), 171

<sup>106</sup> Spurr, "Virtue, Religion and Government", 30

<sup>107</sup> Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England*, 246-7, 235-6



Extraordinary occasions such as these prompted record and reflection, offering insights to historians. Perhaps our view of domestic religion has been unduly influenced by these extraordinary occasions? We must keep in mind these were extraordinary occasions and it is unlikely many families and individuals would have been able to maintain the same pitch and intensity in ordinary devotions. This points to the function of extraordinary religion. An occasion to step away from the demands of ordinary life and focus on spiritual necessities.

Receiving communion at the Lord's Supper was a public act of worship shared by all mainstream Protestants. A focus on the act of reception itself obscures the accompanying devotions of preparation and reflection that happened domestically. Preparation involved linking together individual practices such as prayer, meditation, self-examination, and reading to put heart and mind in the right frame to receive. This was both intellectually ready in terms of knowledge of God and faith, ready in terms of unfeigned repentance, and emotionally ready in terms of the affections. Earnest Protestants of all stripes engaged in personal devotion in preparation for the Lord's Supper. A closer look at the important role the sacrament played in structuring the personal piety of Sir Simonds D'Ewes and Lady Mary Rich is a useful corrective to assumptions historians have made about puritan interest in communion. To discuss conformism as a religion of the sacraments in opposition to Puritanism as a religion of preaching, risks making these appear mutually exclusive. To be committed to the hearing of sermons does not automatically mean less value was placed on communion. The study of puritan religious culture would benefit from further research on preparation for the Lord's Supper and its place in piety.

Fasting was likewise a practice which conformists and Anglicans, as well as the godly, performed and was a fairly innocuous personal devotion. Where it could become contentious was the uses the time carved out was put to and, crucially, with whom. Days of humiliation and fasting brought together a range of personal and communal devotional practices, such as

family prayer, psalm singing, reading, and self-examination. Officially such exercises were permitted where members of a single household joined together. They became conventicles when individuals from beyond the household joined in and they could be considered as a viable alternative to the parish congregation. The household was, however, subject to interpretation; were visitors, relatives, and clients of the household? Days of humiliation and fasting also wove together some of the practices considered more 'enthusiastic' such as psalm singing and sermon repetition. As occasions of emotional fervour they were vulnerable to being labelled contentious excesses. Such activities played an important role in constructing, reinforcing, and projecting family religious identity. Through days of humiliation, members of the household were immersed in the principles and values of Puritanism and expressed a shared identity with co-religionists internationally.

## Chapter 7: SICKNESS, DEATH, AND DOMESTIC RELIGION

The life cycle has increasingly been of interest to social and cultural historians such as David Cressy, who analysed birth, childhood, marriage, death, and mourning.<sup>1</sup> For his monograph, Alec Ryrie reshaped the approach to one of life courses, an individual's path through life to their death and pre-ordained destiny. To examine the Protestant life course was 'to listen to the stories which Protestants told about their lives.'<sup>2</sup> Life course greatly influenced an individual's experience of domestic religion. A child's experience of being subject to a routine of domestic religion might have been transformed into the responsibilities of leading household religion or perhaps negotiating a path between one's personal devotion and the routine of the household one was employed within. Life events also had an impact on domestic religion. Marriage and birth created families and might bring changes to the established household routine.

Perhaps the most extraordinary occasions of all were sickness and the death of household members, relatives, neighbours, and friends. Sickness and death prompted extraordinary religious duties and practices that responded to the circumstances. This was a common experience. The mortality rate in early modern England, based on five-year average national figures, varied between twenty-two per thousand and thirty-three per thousand with significant fluctuations. Average life expectancy was thirty to forty years, partly due to the stark infant mortality rate of between one in five and one in six babies.<sup>3</sup> The archives give the impression that illness, sickness, and pain was central to the experience of life. It is therefore

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<sup>1</sup> David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)

<sup>2</sup> Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 409

<sup>3</sup> Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England 1480-1750*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 6-7. Compared to stable death rates in modern developed countries of around 10 per thousand.

not surprising that sickness impacted religious practice and that religion in turn structured behaviour during periods of sickness.

Sickness and death was most often performed in the domestic setting. Inevitably the presence of an ill or dying person would affect the household's domestic religion; giving added impetus, dominating the subject matter, or influencing the timing and location of practices. However, to describe death in the household as a private event would be inaccurate. It became a public event through the involvement of the community beyond the household. It was a duty for Christians to visit the sick and provide spiritual support to the dying.<sup>4</sup> The sick person would be periodically surrounded by members of their household, by extended family, neighbours, friends, and often by ministers. The role of these people was not only to provide spiritual support but also to bear witness to the manner of the sickness and death. This was significant as the manner of death was often interpreted as an indication of the deceased's eternal fate. Funeral sermons poured off the presses, typically including an account of the last sickness and death. There must have been many thousands more preached but never published. These funeral sermons, and the godly lives often constructed out of them, put the details of an individual's death-bed on display for public consumption, debate, and edification. The death bed was a very public arena and the religious practices surrounding it as public as the funeral that followed.

Given the importance of the deathbed, it is unsurprising that prescriptive writers throughout the post-Reformation period wrote extensively about the ideal manner of preparing for death and devotions to be observed. Ralph Houlbrooke's classic *Death, Religion and the Family in England 1480-1750* surveyed the development of the craft of dying in the prescriptive literature. Protestant reformers rejected the sacramental apparatus of the last rites as well as the focus on good works and fruits of repentance; instead the faith of the dying person took

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<sup>4</sup> Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 191-2

centre stage. With the Protestant concentration on justification by faith alone it was vital that faith did not fail during the last trial and thereby call the deceased's salvation into question. For Reformed Protestants who had internalised the Calvinist doctrine of predestination; election to salvation or damnation at the free will of God, the deathbed was the last trial of the truth of their faith, repentance and grace, and therefore their election. To that end, the godly were to seek assurance of their salvation on the death bed and some inevitably suffered doubts.<sup>5</sup>

Houlebrooke identified two closely intertwined yet distinct patterns in the prescriptive literature; the Calvinist, puritan, or godly tradition which gave centre stage to the dying person armed by their faith, and the more conservative sacramental model.<sup>6</sup> The main points of difference were the role of the minister, the necessity and nature of confession of sins, absolution of sins by a minister, and the communion of the sick; all of which were emphasised in the sacramental model. However, the distinction between the texts was often of tone and emphasis and the death bed is an area of domestic devotional life where there was much consensus between different traditions and also diversity of views with the same tradition.

This chapter will examine archival evidence from the Harley family to explore the reality of sickness and death in domestic religion. Letters exchanged between Lady Brilliana Harley and her family cover her periodic ill health up to her death amidst the Royalist Siege of Brampton Bryan in October 1643. Her final sickness was described as 'an apoplexy with a defluxion of the lungs' which lasted for three days before her death. The eyewitness Captain Priamus Davies claimed 'never was a holy life consummated and concluded with a more heavenly and happy end' for she bore the pain with great patience and through her faith was

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<sup>5</sup> Houlebrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 154, 183

<sup>6</sup> Houlebrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 160, 165, 170, 172, 175

able to face death happily and willingly resign her soul to Christ. Jacqueline Eales suggested that, although Davies was influenced by the conventions of puritan deathbed literature, he was primarily concerned to record the events of the siege and pay ‘sincere tribute’.<sup>7</sup> Due to the circumstances there was no formal funeral for Lady Brilliana and her body was apparently interred within the castle during the second siege.<sup>8</sup> Sir Robert Harley died 6 November 1656 after a long illness. His deathbed is portrayed in three different accounts: his son Edward Harley’s notes on the character and sayings of his father; the account in the funeral sermon by Thomas Froyssell and details in the dedications to Timothy Woodroffe’s 1658 *A Religious Treatise upon Simeons Song, or Instructions advertising how to live holily, and dye happily*. Later seventeenth century Harley family correspondence and personal papers reveal details about how the sickness and death of family members, including Sir Edward Harley, his wives, sons, and daughters-in-law, affected domestic religion at Brampton Bryan.

These archival examples will be supported by deathbed accounts in funeral sermons and godly lives. The exemplary lives in funeral sermons and godly life writing were part of the corpus of prescriptive literature. Deathbed accounts were patterned by the attitudes of the writer and the expectations of the religious community. Commonly held beliefs about death and the making of a good death would have given structure and meaning to the accounts. However, in common with historians Peter Lake and Eric Josef Carlson, I would argue that of all the aspects of godly life writing the death bed account was likely to be one of the more accurate.<sup>9</sup> Most funeral sermons were delivered soon after the person’s death and would need

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<sup>7</sup> Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads*, 175

<sup>8</sup> Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Calendar of the manuscripts of the Marquis of Bath, preserved at Longleat, Wiltshire*, 58 (1904-8), The Harley Papers, An account of the sieges of Brampton Castle and the massacre of Hopton Castle, by Captain Priamus Davies, who was an eye witness

<sup>9</sup> Patrick Collinson, ““A Magazine of Religious Patterns” An Erasmus Topic Transposed in English Protestantism” in *Godly People*, ed. Patrick Collinson, (London: The Hambledon Press, 1983), 510; Peter Lake,

to be recognisable to those who had been present at the death bed in order to fulfil their purpose of comfort and edification. Carlson used the deathbed scenes to 'confirm the trustworthiness of the sermons as guides to female piety.' As preachers did not omit details which might seem to detract from clerical authority, they are likely to be accurate accounts. Katherine Brettergh's deathbed account was published to combat rumours circulated by local Catholics that she had "that she died despairing, & by her comfortlesse end, shewed that she professed a comfortlesse Religion." Carlson argued that to be effective and 'if the papists were to be convicted of misrepresentation, it was essential that the details set out in the refutation be absolutely beyond challenge'.<sup>10</sup>

Godly lives, however, take these accounts and gloss them to provide an interpretive framework for the reader.<sup>11</sup> The bare details in deathbed accounts are fairly representative of reality but the way they have been selected, interpreted, and woven into the narrative is instructive of the prescriptive intent of the author. However the details of the deathbed were interpreted, they help build up our picture of religious practices in the home. Most deathbed accounts included elements considered bad, or not conforming to advice; and good, or conforming to the ideal.<sup>12</sup> This shows that the reality of death was not as predictable and ordered as the prescriptive literature would like.

### **Preparation for death**

Many of the deathbed accounts in funeral sermons and godly lives contain the phrase 'life was a preparation for death'. According to his biographer William Hinde, John Bruen's 'whole life was a meditation of death, so was it also a continuall preparation for it for the

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"Feminine Piety and Personal Potency: The 'Emancipation' of Mrs Jane Ratcliffe", *Seventeenth Century*, 2, no 2, (1987), 143-165; Carlson, "English Funeral sermons as sources", 568

<sup>10</sup> Carlson, "English Funeral sermons as sources", 590

<sup>11</sup> Eales, "Samuel Clarke and the 'Lives'", 373

<sup>12</sup> Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 184

Lord had taught him to number his dayes'.<sup>13</sup> Hinde specified ten particular duties that Bruen performed in preparation for his death, including meditation on heaven as one's home and godly conference with friends on the day of death.<sup>14</sup> Like Bruen, Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick, apparently began preparing for her death while still in perfect health. Her preparation consisted of meditation on death and it was reported that she used to refer to her meditation walks as 'her going to take a turn or two with death'.<sup>15</sup> Some accounts specified an amount of time spent in preparation for death. Nathaniel Barnardiston prepared 'for the space of two years' before his death according to Samuel Faireclough, the incumbent at Kedington who delivered his funeral sermon.<sup>16</sup> However, this was not deemed impressive enough by Samuel Clarke, whose edited version in *Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons* read 'He was unwilling to be surprized and therefore did use endeavours for several years before it came to be ready, but especially for two years before he was'.<sup>17</sup> The simple funeral sermon account was extended and interpreted for prescriptive purposes in the godly life.

Prescriptive authors warned their readers to take heed of illness as a warning to prepare for death. Sir Robert Harley was confined to his chamber for 'some years' before his death in 1656 which gave him plenty of time to prepare for death and demonstrate the seven signs that, for Thomas Froyssell, proved he had made a good death. In his dedication of the published funeral sermon to Sir Edward Harley, Froyssell emphasised the necessity of life-long preparation, with particular care to be taken 'when we are drawing towards our Epilogue' to remain watchful and not to 'blast the precedent Flower of our life with a Blot at last; nor to blemish the fair copy of a good conversation with an Erratum in the End'.<sup>18</sup> It was a lesson that Sir Edward apparently learned. He wrote in his account of his wife Abigail's last

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<sup>13</sup> Hinde, *A faithfull remonstrance*, 200

<sup>14</sup> Hinde, *A faithfull remonstrance*, 202

<sup>15</sup> Clarke, *Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons*, pt2, 178

<sup>16</sup> Samuel Faireclough, *Hagioi axioi, or, The Saints worthiness*, 21

<sup>17</sup> Clarke, *Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons*, Pt.2, 114

<sup>18</sup> Froyssell, *Yadidyah, or, The Beloved Disciple*, dedication fA8v-B2r



sickness and death that her loss, as well as his son Edward's illness and the death of his longest serving man servant, served as a warning that he should prepare for his own 'dreadful tribunal'.<sup>19</sup> Sir Edward begged God for mercy in the face of these holy reproaches and trusted that God would not exercise him more than he could bear.

Other Harley family members also tried to use sickness in this way. The family saw sickness and afflictions as the loving visitations of God for their benefit as it prepared them for death. In 1693 Sir Edward's sister-in-law Kate Bromfield suffered a distemper and expressed a desire to 'improve so yt I may be made fit to dye and willing to dye'. Bromfield condoled with Sir Edward on his own sickness but asserted that 'tis good to have something or other to put us in mind of our mortality'.<sup>20</sup> Communicating these ideas and encouraging each other in the face of sickness helped reinforce the family's collective identity through the sense of sharing a common piety and interpretive framework.

### **Spatial aspects**

The prescriptive literature is almost uniformly silent on the question of what space within home the activities and practices of the deathbed should occupy. Lewis Bayly began his advice for the practice of piety in the time of sickness with instructions to 'shut too thy Chamber doore: Examine thine owne Heart upon thy bed'.<sup>21</sup> We should not infer too much from this as it was common to find beds in many of the spaces in a home during this period. The prescriptive authors were writing for a wide audience so may not have wished to voice assumptions about their readers' living arrangements. The godly lives and archival evidence do, however, offer some clues as to the spatial significance of the sickbed and deathbed. It

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<sup>19</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70130, Misc.91

<sup>20</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70112, Misc.30.3 Kate Bromfield to Sir Edward Harley, 5 August 1693

<sup>21</sup> Bayly, *The Practise of Pietie*, 794

also offers clues as to where domestic religious practices usually took place and the variation sickness brought.

Confinement to the home usually augurs the last sickness of the subject in godly life writing. John Bruen's decline in health is charted in relation to the space he inhabited. At first Bruen continued to attend church on Sunday 'so long as he could go or ride' until eight or nine weeks before his death. For some time, he was still able to 'stir abroad in the house either to the Hall, Parlour or Kitchen' to dispense advice and comforting words but was eventually confined to his bed in 'his little parlour', where he received visitors.<sup>22</sup> The progression of Bruen's illness was represented by his retreat through the domestic space to the deathbed. The distress that Sir Robert Harley felt at his sickness preventing him from attending church was, according to Froyssell, a sign that he had made a good death.<sup>23</sup> The space their sickness allows them to occupy is significant in that it determines which religious duties, public, family, and private, they are still able perform.

Harley archival evidence shows that Brilliana and her family charted the wax and wane of her health through spatial relationships. In mid-April 1626 Brilliana gave birth to her second son and informed her husband by letter straight away, but was unable to write again for ten days. By 11 May, Brilliana was 'reasnabell well' but not yet able to leave her chamber. She was finally able to leave her chamber on 12 May and went 'so fare as the parler to give god thankes with my famely for his mercy to me'.<sup>24</sup> Brilliana suffered regular bouts of illness throughout 1640 and 1641. She regularly reported to her son Edward whether she was confined to her bed or able to sit up in her chamber; from which he could infer the state of her health. It was notable when she was able to leave the house to attend Church. In July 1641, she wrote with pleasure that she was able to partake of 'thos sweet preveleges of His publick

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<sup>22</sup> Hinde, *A faithfull remonstrance*, 210, 215, 206

<sup>23</sup> Froyssell, *Yadidyah, or, The Beloved Disciple*, 112

<sup>24</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70110, f.33r, 12 May 1626

ordinances.' By the following July, her health was better than it had been in years and she called it God's blessing that she could now go abroad rather than keep to her bed.<sup>25</sup>

Lady Brilliana's daughter, also Brilliana, regularly kept her brother Edward apprised of their mother's condition. She too used her mother's spatial relationship to the house as a shorthand. For example, on 24 April 1640 Brilliana was able to walk about her chamber and by 19 June she was able to go into the parlour twice.<sup>26</sup> In February, Sir Robert had been 'so ill upon the satterday night that Mr Gower was to preach in the hall'.<sup>27</sup> It's unclear exactly what is meant here: is the parish minister, and Harley clerical client, Stanley Gower planning to relocate the Sabbath morning service, just the sermon or deliver a repetition or an additional sermon in the castle perhaps? We are unaware who was present, whether the rest of the congregation came with Gower for example, but the choice of hall as the location suggests a crowd. This is potentially a significant blurring of the boundaries between the domestic and public practice of religion.

Later in the century the Harleys continued to use spatial signifiers for their state of health. Sir Edward's daughter Abigail reassured her father after an illness in 1696: 'I thank God am much better than I was & have been in ye parlor most of this evening'.<sup>28</sup> It seems that being able to rejoin the family in the parlour was a significant moment in recovery; a moment when the sick were able to resume family life and religious practice. Abigail expressed this in an emotional letter to her father after her brother Edward's recovery from a serious illness 'tis a mercy that I trust shall never be forgotten... sennight none about him expected his life & this day he was able to sit in ye parlor while we dined'.<sup>29</sup> Sickness and death gave domestic space

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<sup>25</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, Letter, CXXIX, 141, 23 July 1641; Letter CXXX, 142, 26 July 1641

<sup>26</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70002, f.288, 24 April 1640; f.298, 19 June 1640;

<sup>27</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70002, f.269, 29 February 1639/40

<sup>28</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70117, Abigail Harley to Sir Edward Harley, 16 March 1696

<sup>29</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70116, Abigail Harley to Sir Edward Harley, 30 January 1693/4

great significance as the scene in which it played out; it would have contributed to the sense of family as defined by the Brampton Bryan household. However, at the same time the boundaries of domestic space loosened up as religious activities not usually enacted within the home followed sickness through it to the deathbed.

### **Company and support**

In contrast to the prescriptive literature, where the presence of family members at the death bed was not emphasised, the overwhelming impression from the funeral sermons and godly lives is that spouses and children provided the most company, comfort, and support to the sick and dying. Elizabeth Wilkinson's husband was a constant companion and support throughout her last sickness; he expounded to her the promises of assurance, read, prayed, and spoke godly words with her.<sup>30</sup> Margaret Ducke's, Lady Elizabeth Langham's, and Margaret Baxter's husbands performed similar roles at their death beds.<sup>31</sup> Other close relatives provided company and support to the sick and dying by joining with them in religious exercises. Nathaniel Barnardiston was attended on his deathbed by his brother and his children, and his sons in particular were present to hear his counsels and prompt his declarations of faith and joy.<sup>32</sup> Children were a particularly common source of company and comfort.

The importance of children's attendance is shown in several accounts where the children are urgently sent for when the sickness appears to be fatal. Late seventeenth century non-conformist John Angier sent for his son and son-in-law when it seemed apparent that he was going to die, but they did not arrive until after his death. Angier himself had not made it back

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<sup>30</sup> Clarke, *A collection of the lives of ten eminent divines*, 530-1

<sup>31</sup> Clarke, *A collection of the lives of ten eminent divines*, 498-9; Clarke, *Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons*, Pt. 2, 139-40

<sup>32</sup> Faireclough, *Hagioi axioi, or, The Saints worthiness*, 22-3

in time for his own father's death which caused him much distress.<sup>33</sup> Many of the accounts use the general term 'family' which I've taken to mean spouses, children, and other co-habiting relatives as well as servants. The account of Margaret Corbet's death reports that she 'sent for all her family' and then blessed her children, counselled her servants, and commended her husband to God.<sup>34</sup> Friends and neighbours also appear among the people attending at death beds in these accounts. John Bruen's friends came to 'minister either counsell or comfort unto him'. Lady Mary Rich had her friends about her during her last sickness, who joined in with her prayers and exercises, while Margaret Ducke was visited by neighbours from the congregation in the parish.<sup>35</sup>

Many of the godly deathbed accounts include ministers visiting and counselling the sick person. Ministers came to counsel and comfort John Bruen in his sickness: William Hinde, his brother-in-law, and two other unidentified ministers who asked him profitable questions which allowed him to demonstrate his faith, patience, and willingness to die.<sup>36</sup> The two ministers 'resolved not to trouble him much with many words, in his great weaknesse' and instead joined with him in prayer and spoke comforting words. After Hinde had tearfully taken his leave, Bruen also called other ministers, including his own pastor, to pray with him.<sup>37</sup> Hinde's account shows godly prescriptive advice in practice; the ministers performed the same consolatory role as the other attendants, and they modified their exhortations according to the abilities of the sick person. Hinde also supported Bruen by taking his place leading family prayer in the 'great parlour' when Bruen was unable to perform that duty.

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<sup>33</sup> Oliver Heywood, *A narrative of the holy life, and happy death of that reverend, faithful and zealous man of God, and minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Mr. John Angier, many years Pastor of the Church of Christ at Denton, near Manchester in Lancashire wherein are related many passages that concern his birth, education, his entrance into the ministry, discharge of his trust therein, and his death*, (London: Printed for Tho. Parkhurst, 1683), 75, 5

<sup>34</sup> Samuel Clarke, *A collection of the lives of ten eminent divines*, 509

<sup>35</sup> Samuel Clarke, *The Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons*, pt.2, 123 (Mr John Row); Hinde, *A faithfull remonstrance*, 209, 213, 215; Clarke, *The Lives of Sundry eminent persons*, pt.2, 179; Clarke, *A collection of the lives of ten eminent divines*, 497

<sup>36</sup> Hinde, *A faithfull remonstrance*, 208

<sup>37</sup> Hinde, *A faithfull remonstrance*, 224-27

Bruen instructed that the door of his little parlour should be left open so that he might hear 'and joyne with us'.<sup>38</sup> The boundary between the defined spaces were dissolved by the act of household worship that encompassed Hinde and the family in one room and Bruen in the other. While many deathbed accounts indicate the presence of a minister at some point, these accounts do not follow the same pattern with ministers performing different roles and practices. Others do not mention the presence of a minister at all. It seems that in practice there was a great deal of variety in the involvement of ministers at the godly domestic deathbed.

In accounts from the more conservative tradition the minister played a central role in religious practices at the deathbed. This was related to the desire of the sick to make a confession, receive absolution, and take the Lord's Supper. George Ferebe's 1614 funeral sermon for Wiltshire gentleman John Drew, has the minister as the only presence at Drew's deathbed orchestrating the dying man through instruction, confession, and communion. Ferebe described himself as an 'over-seer' and indicated that love and duty 'brought me often to him'.<sup>39</sup> John Stanhope's father, Philip Stanhope Baron of Sheldon in Nottinghamshire was a key figure at his death bed in 1623 but it was John Wall's absolution that was emphasised as the dramatic climax of the deathbed in his funeral sermon.<sup>40</sup> Later in the century the account of Sir Roger Bradshaigh's death in his funeral sermon delivered by Richard Wroe also emphasised the role of the minister at the deathbed. The un-named minister prompted Sir

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<sup>38</sup> Hinde, *A faithfull remonstrance*, 226

<sup>39</sup> George Ferebe, *Lifes farewell. Or A funerall sermon preached at Saint Iohns in the Deuises in Wilshiere, the 30. of August last 1614 At the funerall of Iohn Drew Gentleman. By George Ferebe Master of Arts, and preacher of the Word at Bishops Cannings in Wilshire*, (London: Printed by Edw. Griffin, for Ralph Mabbe, 1615), 28

<sup>40</sup> John Wall, *A sermon preached at Shelford, in Nottinghamshire on the death of that noble, and thrice-worthy gentleman, M. Iohn Stanhope, sonne and heire to the right Honourable, Philip, Lord Stanhope, Baron of Shelford. Whose corps was translated from Christ-Church in Oxford, to the sepuchres of his fathers in the Church of Shelford*, (London: Printed by H. L. for Matthew Lownes, 1623), fourth unfoliated leaf after sig.C5

Roger's confession of faith and confession of sins before leading him in prayers and the sacrament.<sup>41</sup>

Members of the Harley family were each other's chief company and support. Some of Lady Brilliana's letters to her husband and first son Edward were written for her by her second son Robert. The Harley children were the chief comfort for Sir Robert during his sickness of some years' duration and eventual death in 1656. Harley was attended by a godly minister, but in Thomas Froyssell's account the minister's role is limited to speaking with him concerning his dissolution. Instead Sir Robert's heir Edward played a leading role at his deathbed; recording his sayings and the Bible phrases he read.<sup>42</sup> This document is undated, but its un-composed nature suggests it may have been dashed off in the midst of grief.<sup>43</sup> We can only assume that Sir Edward derived comfort from his hurried jottings of his father's expressions and sayings to have preserved them among his papers. We know that he owned a copy of the printed version of the funeral sermon as the copy in Cambridge University contains a handwritten dedication from Sir Edward to his grandson Edward Harley.<sup>44</sup> (Figure 10). The dedication was dated 1697 as he passed on this treasured text to the younger generation. In it Sir Edward implored the mercy of God that his grandson Edward would walk in the footsteps of his pious great-grandfather.

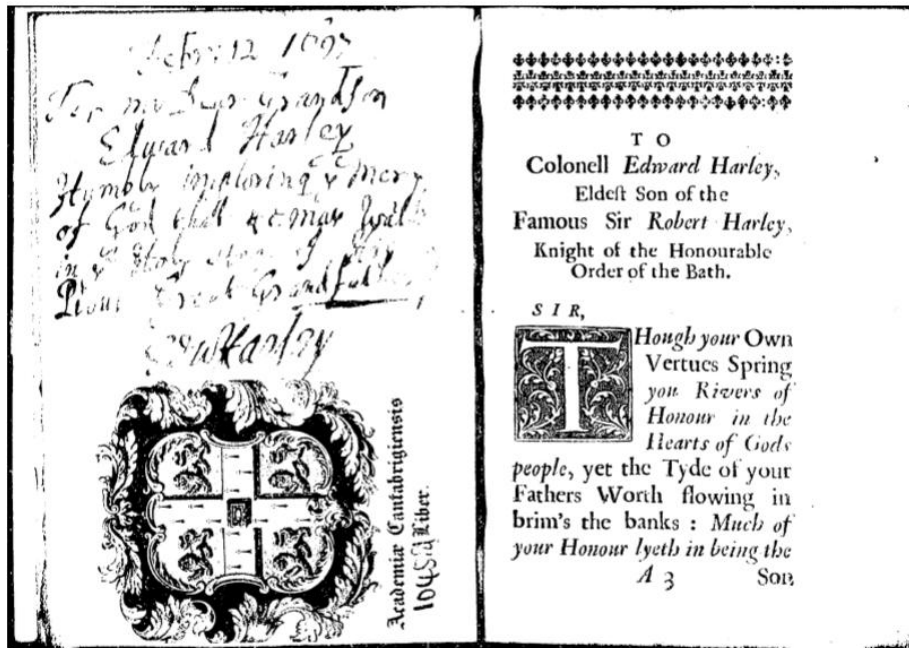
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<sup>41</sup> Richard Wroe, *Righteousness encouraged and rewarded with an everlasting remembrance in a sermon at the funeral of the right worshipful Sir Roger Bradshaigh of Haigh, Knight and Baronet, who died at Chester on Monday, March 31, and was buried at Wigan, Friday, Apr. 4, 1684*, (London: Printed for Benj. Tooke, 1684), 20

<sup>42</sup> Froyssell, *Yadidyah, or, The Beloved Disciple*, 118

<sup>43</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70130, Misc.73

<sup>44</sup> Copy digitised for Early English Books Online; the grandson was either his son Sir Robert Harley's (later 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Oxford and Mortimer) son or the son of his second son Sir Edward Harley (usually known as Auditor Harley).



**Figure 10: Autograph dedication of Sir Edward Harley to his grandson Edward, Thomas Froyssell, *Yadidyah or, The beloved disciple* A sermon preached at the funerall of the Honourable Sir Robert Harley, Knight of the Honourable Order of the Bath; at Brampton-Brian in Hereford-shire. December 10. 1656, (London: printed by M.S. for Thomas Parkhurst, 1658), copy in Cambridge University Library, digitised by Early English Books Online**

Those gathered around the sick bed were there to hear the advice and exhortations of their dying relative and friend. Nathaniel Barnardiston delivered 'so many heavenly counsels and precious instructions tending to their everlasting inheritance' that Faireclough likened it to a heavenly sermon.<sup>45</sup> At their request he gave each son a character assessment telling them 'what evils he had noted each of them most prone unto, and what duties he had observed any of them most negligent in'.<sup>46</sup> Visitors to John Bruen's bedside received God's word and admonitions according to their 'growth in Christianity' and stirred up the godly minds of many.<sup>47</sup> Bruen's son and heir received many instructions and exhortations including encouragement to be constant in religion and to uphold the worship of God in his family.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Faireclough, *Hagioi axioi, or, The Saints worthiness*, 21

<sup>46</sup> Faireclough, *Hagioi axioi, or, The Saints worthiness*, 22-3

<sup>47</sup> Hinde, *A faithfull remonstrance*, 217-9

<sup>48</sup> Hinde, *A faithfull remonstrance*, 222



Sir Edward Harley recorded the exhortations Sir Robert delivered to his children from his deathbed. He desired nothing but that they 'keep from sin' and he hoped that they would learn to die as they had learnt to live, by his example.<sup>49</sup> Thomas Froysell emphasised this paternal example by dedicating the published funeral sermon to Sir Edward.

### **Domestic prayer at the deathbed**

It was particularly important that the dying person's prayers and devotional comportment was witnessed and most deathbed accounts emphasised prayer in its different forms; personal, communal, and family. Godly lives in particular often reported the words used by the dying person in prayer. This reveals the edificatory function of godly lives; readers are provided with material for their own prayers. It also underlines the significance placed on the speeches and personal prayers of the dying. According to Thomas Froysell when Sir Robert Harley arose three days before his death he prayed for the 'Ruine of Antichrist and 'the Churches of God beyond sea'. The day before his death his personal prayers blessed God for mercies toward the church, the nation and his family.<sup>50</sup> His prayers, even on his deathbed, are not focused inwardly upon himself but instead situate himself and the Harley family as part of the wider godly community. William Hinde's account of John Bruen's deathbed included a list of prayers from his personal morning prayers, his short 'ejaculations' and in his 'secret and silent meditations'.<sup>51</sup> Typically, personal prayers reported in godly lives and funeral sermons follow a pattern which involved expressing willingness to die, faith in God's mercy and assurance that death will bring communion with the Lord in heaven.<sup>52</sup> These prayers were often accompanied by the gestures of lifting up the hands and eyes to heaven. These gestures were accorded so much significance that when a dying person had lost their speech the deathbed account often simply referred to them lifting up their hands and or eyes. This suggested that

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<sup>49</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70130, Misc.73

<sup>50</sup> Froysell, *Yadidyah, or, The Beloved Disciple*, 117, 118

<sup>51</sup> Hinde, *A faithfull remonstrance*, 209

<sup>52</sup> Hinde, *A faithfull remonstrance*, 226 Clarke, *A collection of the lives of ten eminent divines*, 495

the dying person had continued in silent prayer until the last moments. Nathaniel Barnardiston for example had lain for some time as if in a slumber but had at the end opened his eyes and 'lifting up his hands to heaven, fell asleep in the Lord'.<sup>53</sup>

Sir Edward Harley was influenced by godly lives literature when he composed deathbed accounts for his wife Abigail and daughter-in-law Elizabeth. Their reported prayers echo those seen in godly lives. He wrote that Abigail 'incessantly & most fervently used in cries and tears unto ye Lord Her God & saviour Not to be a stranger to her soul, Presently now, to give her communion, union with him'. Elizabeth Harley, meanwhile, was advised to rest by the doctor but instead continued her soft prayer 'blessed be god his mercies and infinite loving kindness to me what shall I render to the lord for all his benefits'. Sir Edward sought to reassure himself and others that his wife and daughter-in-law had made good deaths and he used their prayers to establish their willingness to die and their faith in God's saving grace. Abigail had been deprived of her speech during her sickness and this greatly disturbed Sir Edward. He was quick to emphasise that a convulsion in her face had 'hindred her speech but not her understanding'. His account included a postscript to the effect that Abigail had told their daughters that during one of these fits of speechlessness, she had experienced 'most sweet communion with God'. He also used gesture to suggest prayer noting that she lifted her eyes to heaven shortly before a peaceful death.<sup>54</sup>

Those gathered around the deathbed also joined together in communal domestic prayer. Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick, died while engaged in communal prayer. The countess was praying with a minister and one of her ladies when 'she was heard to fetch a sigh or groan, which was esteemed devotional' but was in fact her death.<sup>55</sup> Women in the godly lives were often portrayed in communal prayer on their deathbed surrounded by their husband, family,

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<sup>53</sup> Faireclough, *Hagioi axioi, or, The Saints worthiness*, 23

<sup>54</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70126, Misc.9; 70130, Misc.91

<sup>55</sup> Clarke, *The Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons*, pt.2, 179

and friends. A few days before her death, Margaret Corbet sent for all her family to come to her chamber 'with whom she prayed near two hours, with such pathetical, heavenly, Scripture-language, as drew admiration and tears from those that were present...and could not easily part with the company, nor yet leave off praying, and weeping'. Margaret Ducke called her husband and family out of their beds as she felt death approaching and desired that they might now all pray together, which they did, she still expressing much devotion and comfort. Neighbouring gentlewomen continued with her in prayer until the morning.<sup>56</sup> It is significant that each of these lives featured in the appendix to Clarke's *Ten Eminent Divines* published in 1662. In *Sundry Eminent Persons* published in 1683 there are no such scenes of communal prayer led by the dying women memorialised. In this later collection of lives the female subject, Lady Elizabeth Langham, Margaret Baxter, and Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick, among them, typically joined in prayer with her husband or with a minister.<sup>57</sup> This could be due to changed sensibilities in the intervening twenty years, particularly in the context of female spiritual leadership in the sects. In Sir Edward Harley's account of his daughter-in-law Elizabeth's death he placed himself and Brampton Bryan minister Mr Lloyd at her bedside and noted that one or the other of them 'prayed constantly with her' and she joined in 'with great affection'.<sup>58</sup>

It is notable that most deathbed accounts refer to formal family prayer. John Row's biographer emphasised that, while Row was able, he continued to 'pray in and with his family'.<sup>59</sup> The week before he died Sir Nathaniel Barnardiston was persuaded to go to bed before family prayer and consequently slept worse 'for the want of it' and could not be persuaded to do so again.<sup>60</sup> John Bruen asked William Hinde to take his place leading the

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<sup>56</sup> Clarke, *A collection of the lives of ten eminent divines*, 539, 509, 499

<sup>57</sup> Clarke, *The Lives of Sundry eminent persons*, pt. 2, 205, 92, 179

<sup>58</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70126, Misc. 9

<sup>59</sup> Clarke, *The Lives of Sundry eminent persons*, pt. 2, 122

<sup>60</sup> Faireclough, *Hagioi axioi, or, The Saints worthiness*, 22

evening family prayer in the great parlour, which demonstrated 'his care for prayer in the family'.<sup>61</sup> In the godly life, Hinde emphasised that the householder's illness does not abnegate their responsibility for family prayer. Family prayer took on particular significance when a sick member of the family recovered and was able to rejoin those formal devotions. Lady Brilliana Harley was confined to her chamber for over a month in April 1626. She announced her recovery to her husband Sir Robert by writing on 12 May that she had left her chamber and been 'so fare as the parler to give god thankes with my famely for his mercy to me'.<sup>62</sup> This accords with prescriptive instructions to engage in communal prayers of thanksgiving when a sick person recovers their health. Bayly, for example, provided meditations and prayers of thanksgiving which focussed on amendment of life and preparation for the return of affliction and sickness.<sup>63</sup>

The duty to pray for the sick extended beyond the deathbed to those who could not be present. The sick and dying often begged the prayers of others on their behalf.<sup>64</sup> When distressed by illness during pregnancy in May 1630, Brilliana begged her husband 'I hope the Lord will deale in mercy with me; and, deare Sir, let me have your prayers, for I have need of them.' She likewise repeatedly entreated her son Edward to pray for her in her sickness. When Edward himself fell ill Brilliana was extremely anxious and promised all her prayers for his recovery. Brilliana also offered her son practical advice; Edward was to focus his thoughts on God and to consider that God corrects through sickness so that 'we may see the evil of our ways, and finde how bitter sin is'.<sup>65</sup> By entreating the prayers of others the sick

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<sup>61</sup> Hinde, *A faithfull remonstrance*, 226

<sup>62</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70110, f.33r, Lady Brilliana Harley to Sir Robert Harley, 12 May 1626

<sup>63</sup> Bayly, *The Practise of Pietie*, 842-55

<sup>64</sup> Clarke, *The Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons*, 123; Clarke, *A collection of the lives of ten eminent divines*, 496

<sup>65</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, Letter, CXXIX, 47, 29 April 1639

and dying asserted their position among the godly. The duty of reciprocal prayer that family and friends had for one another further bound the godly community together.

Also interesting is the collective devotions that took place at Brampton Bryan during the 1690s when Harley family members were ill away from home. In December 1694, when one of his sons was ill, Sir Edward trusted that his daughter Martha's prayers would be fervent on her brother's behalf and asked the household 'to set apart some time for solemn fervent prayer on our behalf'.<sup>66</sup> In 1697, the family in Brampton Bryan again gathered together in prayer to make 'serious and humble supplications to ye god of compation' for a seriously ill Harley brother. Sarah Foley, who lived with her future in-laws at Brampton Bryan, indicated that their local ministers Mr Lloyd and Mr Nelson and the children had joined in.<sup>67</sup> Abigail Harley reported to her father that the children 'pour'd out floods of tears all ye time ye ministers were praying for their dear father'.<sup>68</sup> There was another day of prayer held with the same ministers and Mr Clogie, another Harley family clerical client, just four days later. Abigail chose to write to her father the day before as she would not have enough time the following day, which implies how intense these days of supplication were.<sup>69</sup> After, she told her father that not only had the ministers been present to beg mercy in this time of trouble but that their 'cousin beale' had also come to join with them too.<sup>70</sup> At the end of June the family was again holding days of prayer but this time of thanksgiving. Abigail reported that both her Aunt Harley and Cousin Beale 'cam yesterday to joyn with us in returning thanks for my brothers recovery as they had done in begging mercy for him.'<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70127, Misc. 48, Sir Edward Harley to Martha Harley, 25 December 1694

<sup>67</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70114, Sarah Foley to Sir Edward Harley, 1 June 1697

<sup>68</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70117, Abigail Harley to Sir Edward Harley, 1 June 1697

<sup>69</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70117, Abigail Harley to Sir Edward Harley, 3 June 1697

<sup>70</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70117, Abigail Harley to Sir Edward Harley, 5 June 1697

<sup>71</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70117, Abigail Harley to Sir Edward Harley, 29 June 1697

The flurry of letters over these and other sicknesses show how the Harleys interpreted sickness and death in a providential framework; such afflictions were sent by God upon the family for their benefit. Abigail had learnt this from her father, Sir Edward, as he had learnt it from his. She wrote to him 'Sees we need such severe discipline to correct our wandrings, it often comes in my mind what I have heard you say, it be good to draw neer to God, whatever bringes us nearer to god must be good, I humbly beg this may be ye blessed issue of ye various sad providences exercised to us of late'.<sup>72</sup> It was never too early for members of the Harley family to learn this lesson. When her aunt Martha was ill in 1696, Sir Edward wrote to his granddaughter Elizabeth, who could not have been more than ten years old, 'you must learne betimes that all things are sent to us by God to draw us nearer to him who only is infinite goodness & love'.<sup>73</sup> Holding days of prayer allowed them to instantly take heed of the warning 'not to put off ye great business of life, preparing for death, til a sick bed' as Abigail wrote after her sister Martha's death in May 1694.<sup>74</sup> Their prayer days also bought them together as a family and span the physical distance that separated them from their sick relatives elsewhere. It comforted them to feel like they were taking action as a family however they recognised that God's mercy was of his own will. In 1694 Abigail assured her father 'the incessant prayers are not wanting to ye throne of grace that ye god of all grace may support & comfort you under every burden, & to fill my dear brother with joy & peace in believing... but all our confidence is in the alsufficient intercession of our blessed redeemer who ever lives to intercede for sinners...to whose infinite grace you & my dear brother are commended.'<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70116, Abigail Harley to Sir Edward Harley, 29 March 1692

<sup>73</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70130, Misc. 76, Sir Edward Harley to his granddaughter Elizabeth Harley 30 June 30 1696

<sup>74</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70116, Abigail Harley to Sir Edward Harley, 29 May 1694

<sup>75</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70116, Abigail Harley to Sir Edward Harley, 29 December 1694

These prayer practices in response to sickness reinforced the Harley's corporate identity as a family, contributing to their shared sense of themselves as an elect family subject to the providences of God. This sense of themselves as corporate members of the elect is expressed in a letter Abigail Harley wrote to her father Sir Edward in his illness in 1694: 'tis great mercy we are not here in ye same distressed condition with other families, that the free grace that makes ye difference will I trust sanctify al dispensation & magnify divine mercy to a poor unworthy family in restoring you to health'.<sup>76</sup>

### **Reading, meditation, and self-examination**

Reading, or listening to, the Bible and other religious works was a prominent feature of deathbed accounts, much more so than in the prescriptive literature. Given the long sicknesses some people endured it is hardly surprising. Lady Mary Armyne's funeral sermon emphasised that she continued her habit of daily reading scripture and 'other choice books' until the very end.<sup>77</sup> In other accounts, the dying person is read to by an attendant. Each sick person had their own preferred Bible chapters which they desired to hear on their deathbed. John Row asked specifically for the 16th psalm and the first sixth verses of the Isaiah 26 to be read to him often. Richard Baxter read many psalms and a chapter to his wife Margaret while she was on her deathbed. Margaret managed to repeat part of the chapter and sang part of a psalm.<sup>78</sup>

Lady Brilliana Harley suffered prolonged periods of confinement to her bed and, in one of these, chose to read Calvin's *Life of Luther* and translated it from French into English. She

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<sup>76</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70116, Abigail Harley to Sir Edward Harley, 22 May 1694

<sup>77</sup> J.D., *A sermon preached at the funeral of that incomparable lady the Honourable the Lady Mary Armyne*, (London: Printed for Nevil Simmons, 1676), 26

<sup>78</sup> Clarke, *The Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons*, pt. 2, 123; Richard Baxter, *A BREVATE OF THE LIFE OF MARGARET, The Daughter of FRANCIS CHARLTON, of Apply in Shropshire, Esq And Wife of RICHARD BAXTER. For the use of all, but especially of their Kindred. There is also Published the Character of her Mother, truly described in her Published Funeral Sermon, Reprinted at her Daughters Request, called, The Last Work of a Believer, His passing-prayer, recommending his departing Spirit to Christ, to be received by him*, (London: Printed for B. Simmons, 1681), 92; Heywood, *A narrative of the holy life*, 144

sent a copy of the translation to her son Edward. It is unlikely that Edward could not read it in the original French so we might ask why she did this. She read, she claimed, out of a desire for an entertainment that might be of some benefit; she wished to show 'how willingly I impart any thinge to you, in whiche I finde any good'.<sup>79</sup> Sir Edward Harley noted his father's favoured scriptural quotes at various points in his life including in his sickness, under his greatest pain and just before his death. The 28<sup>th</sup> and 32<sup>nd</sup> verses of Romans 8 were particular favourites that 'he would repeat often in health as wel as in his sicknes, they being places from which he drew much sweetnes & support'. Apparently, Sir Robert would say 'he knew no such cordialls'. Sir Edward believed that it was these expressions emphasising the will of God which preserved Sir Robert from the 'venom of tentations and afflictions' at the time of his final sickness.<sup>80</sup> Sir Robert spent most of the time he was confined in his sickness listening to a good book or the scriptures. Thomas Froyssell interpreted this as 'divine employment' and was one of signs that Sir Robert had made a good death.<sup>81</sup> Timothy Woodroffe claimed that Sir Robert read parts of the manuscript from which Woodroffe derived his 1658 treatise on 'how to live holily, and dye happily' to Robert Harley during his sickness, who gladly received his advice being 'utterly disenabled to wait upon God in his publick Ordinances'.<sup>82</sup>

Meditation was one of the most common practices in deathbed accounts, matching the advice in the prescriptive literature. Jane Ratcliffe prepared a list of God's providences ready for deathbed meditation. Although her biographer, John Ley, was not present at her death he doubted not that Ratcliffe, 'having the free use of all her faculties' exercised her soul in

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<sup>79</sup> *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, Letter XL, 51-3, (10 May 1639)

<sup>80</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70130, Misc.73

<sup>81</sup> Froyssell, *Yadidyah, or, The Beloved Disciple*, 112-3

<sup>82</sup> Timothy Woodroffe, *A Religious Treatise upon Simeons Song, or, Instructions advertising how to live holily, and dye happily*, (London: Printed for Tho. Parkhurst, 1658), sig.a4, epistle to the reader



sacred meditations, using the list of particulars to remember that she had stored up.<sup>83</sup> John Row apparently did not choose to speak much in his sickness but saved his breath for his 'holy meditations' and soliloquies.<sup>84</sup> Meditation on the benefits of heaven and God's promise not to allow the faithful to be tempted above what they are capable of allowed Sir Robert Harley to maintain patience under the pain of his 'stone and palsie'.<sup>85</sup>

Despite its prominence in the prescriptive literature self-examination, meditation upon one's sins or signs of election does not loom as large as prayer, or even reading, in the deathbed accounts. Most of the dying are portrayed as totally assured of their salvation. John Row had apparently been full of conflict in his life but in his death he was sure of his salvation saying 'I have waited upon God for my Salvation; and blessed be God I shall not be disappointed'.<sup>86</sup> Upon coming to the conviction that he should not live long John Bruen 'did very carefully addresses himself, labouring for a gracious confidence of this blessed and happy exchange' of a state of misery on this world for a state of glory in heaven. This he did by 'clearing his evidence and confirming his assurance of it'.<sup>87</sup> It was common for the sick and dying to compose or consult written evidence of their salvation. Jane Ratcliffe had prepared a 'breviate of God's principall benefits to herself' designed for meditation on her death bed.<sup>88</sup> Lady Mary Armyne consulted the minister Richard Baxter regarding her evidences during her sickness and just days before her death. He judged them to be sound, after which Armyne dedicated herself to God.<sup>89</sup> Despite being connected to puritan styles of religiosity this pattern of behaviour does not sound so dissimilar from confession to a minister.

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<sup>83</sup> John Ley, *A Patterne of Pietie*, 93, 159-60

<sup>84</sup> Clarke, *The Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons*, Pt. 2, 122

<sup>85</sup> Froyssell, *Yadidyah, or, The Beloved Disciple*, 115-6

<sup>86</sup> Clarke, *The Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons* pt.2, 123

<sup>87</sup> Hinde, *A faithfull remonstrance*, 207

<sup>88</sup> Ley, *A Patterne of Pietie*, 93

<sup>89</sup> J.D., *A sermon preached*, Richard Baxter's preface

## Grief and consolation

So many of the letters with religious or devotional content exchanged within the Harley and Gell families were written on the occasion of sickness and death. Sir Edward wrote to his daughter-in-law Elizabeth Harley when her son died in 1690 thankful that she was able to resign herself to God's will. They were all to comfort themselves with the certain knowledge that the child is 'with ye lord in that capacious bosome of fulnes of joy, whether wee aspire'. He tried to persuade her that it is good to bear such afflictions for it will draw her closer to God and grace will abound in her soul.<sup>90</sup> Friends and extended family felt a duty to condole and console those grieving; and where they could not do so in person, would fulfil that duty through correspondence. As Paul D'Ewes wrote to Sir John Isham on the occasion of Isham's wife Judith's death: 'That which we cannot performe in person we doo by an epistle'.<sup>91</sup> Sir Robert Harley was reproached by his Sir Horace Vere for not performing this duty for Lady Mary Vere on the occasion of her son William's death in 1623. Sir Horace wrote 'My wife thinkes sshe is not soe well in yr good opinion as sshe was wont to be ...that yt hath pleased god to lay this sharp chastisement upon her att this tyme especially lettres of consolation would have been comfortable unto her.'<sup>92</sup> Ralph Houlbrooke identified two features of correspondence prompted by bereavement: condolence 'sharing the sorrow of the bereaved person' and consolation 'reasons for not grieving'. He suggests that from the early seventeenth century there was a growing emphasis on sympathetic condolence rather than rigorist consolation.<sup>93</sup> However in the Harley and Gell letters the theme of consolation predominates across the century.

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<sup>90</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70129, Misc 68, Sir Edward Harley to his daughter-in-law Elizabeth Harley, 2 August 1690

<sup>91</sup> Northamptonshire Record Office, Northampton, Isham Correspondence, IC1 66, Paul D'Ewes to Sir John Isham

<sup>92</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70001, f.266, Sir Horace Vere to Robert Harley, 30 December 1623

<sup>93</sup> Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 246

The most common sentiment expressed is that the bereaved should not grieve excessively. Mourners are counselled that their grief should be moderated by the knowledge that their loved one has surely been saved and is now with God in heaven. When Katherine Gell died in 1671 a flurry of letters advised her husband and children to moderate their grief. James Sutton consoled Sir John Gell 'do not ... grieve imodestly for she walked with god and she is not dead for god hath taken her to himselfe'.<sup>94</sup> The ejected minister John Oldfield condoled one of Katherine's daughters 'methinks I hear you bemoaning your losse & every day adding some new aggravations: I blame you not, a mother, such a mother is a losse indeed'.<sup>95</sup> However, Oldfield goes on to a thorough-going consolation demonstrating that her mother is not properly lost while her instructions live in her daughters heart and while the godly preserve her memory.

Temperance and Elizabeth Gell also received letters in the wake of their father's death in February 1689. Ellis Farnsworth, a Derbyshire minister, impressed upon them that their father had left behind the corruption, sin, cares and fears of the world and was now 'entertaining himself in the immediate vision of God & in the dear conversation of Jesus Christ'. How could they therefore 'so immoderately grieve under the sense of this glorious advancement'.<sup>96</sup> Another correspondent admitted it was a hard lesson but they should 'set rownes to your sorrow and keep it within bounds' as their father is now a 'glorified and triumphing saint'.<sup>97</sup> Some went even further and encouraged the bereaved to rejoice at the death of their loved one. Richard Whalley exhorted his sister-in-law Lady Joan Barrington 'Oh sister, rejoyce; good maddam rejoyce, rejoyce, even contrary to flesh and blood, rejoyce

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<sup>94</sup> Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, Gell of Hopton Hall, D258/17/31/54, James Sutton to Sir John Gell 1670/1

<sup>95</sup> Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, Gell of Hopton Hall, D258/38/11/8, John Oldfield to 'Good Madam', 13 March 1670/1

<sup>96</sup> Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, Gell of Hopton Hall, D258/38/11/25, Ellis Farnsworth to Elizabeth and Temperance Gell, 16 February 1688/9

<sup>97</sup> Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, Gell of Hopton Hall, D258/38/11/26, 21 February 1688/9

for his departure' after her husband Sir Francis Barrington died in 1628 as he 'lived in honour, dyed in peace, forewent God's heavy judgement...and shall rise in glory eternall'.<sup>98</sup>

The letter of condolence and consolation was an opportunity to express confidence and assurance in the deceased's election. Sir John Gell was encouraged to mourn moderately 'seeing you have such well grounded hopes yt yr good wife is safely [arri]vived in ye havon of [God] where she [is free from] sin from temptation'.<sup>99</sup> Unswerving belief in Sir Francis Barrington's election and salvation underpins the letters of consolation Lady Barrington received after his death. Sir Thomas Eliot contrasted Sir Francis' death to the damned condition of most, writing 'in his virtues he still lives and shall outlast the the longest man alive' and Sir William Meux was comforted with the thought that Sir Francis died as he lived 'happily chalking out a way for us to walke in'.<sup>100</sup> John Oldfield feared Elizabeth Gell's natural grief may cause her to doubt her elder brother John's eternal condition when he died in 1674. Oldfield himself could not offer assurance on this point being as he had been forcibly exiled from the family by the Five Mile Act since 1665.<sup>101</sup> Oldfield had heard rumours of John's good inclinations and advised Elizabeth to consider his 'love to the word, his constancy in duty, his respect to them that feared the Lord, his desire to see the liberty of the gospel &c' to assure herself of his salvation.<sup>102</sup> Oldfield also desired Elizabeth to send an account of how John had composed himself during his last sickness and departure, suggesting that this was still seen as an indication of their salvation.

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<sup>98</sup> Arthur Searle, *Barrington Family Letters 1628-1632, Camden Fourth Series, Volume 28*, (London: Royal Historical Society, 1983), 29 (Egerton 2644, f.275)

<sup>99</sup> Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, Gell of Hopton Hall, D258/17 /31/54, James Sutton to Sir John Gell 1670/1

<sup>100</sup> Searle, *Barrington Family Letters*, 32-33 (Egerton 2644, f. 279 and f. 283)

<sup>101</sup> The Five Mile Act prevented him from being within five miles of Carsington from where he had been ejected in 1662. "Charles II, 1665: An Act for restraining Non-Conformists from inhabiting in Corporations", *BHO: British History Online*, accessed 04 February 2012, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=47375>

<sup>102</sup> Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, Gell of Hopton Hall, D258/38/11/10, John Oldfield to Elizabeth Gell, 10 September 1674

To grieve excessively showed a lack of confidence in the saving power of God through the mercy of Christ and ingratitude for the favour and blessing of God. Excessive sorrow demonstrated a want of love and trust in God as the director of all things for the benefit of his elect and a lack of patience and submission to God's will in the face of his afflictions. Francis Gell counselled his sister Temperance on the occasion of their father's death in early 1689 'we must submitt to gods will, yt we ought to bee thankefull to allmighty god yt hee hath continued him so long to us & yt we ought not to offend him by excessive trouble att his dealeings'.<sup>103</sup> Ellis Farneworth beseeched Temperance and Elizabeth Gell to 'allay' their grief to the degree that it may 'consist with yr submission to God and may not help to destroy yourselves'. Farneworth warned that excessive sorrow suggested that they either do not believe that God can glorify himself by this dispensation, or that they do not value God's glory. Similarly another Gell Chaplain Francis Tallents recommended that Elizabeth Gell and her sister 'Praise ye Ld daily & unfeignedly' and rejoice in the long time they had with their parents and the benefits they had from them.<sup>104</sup> Moderating grief was not only about confidence in the loved one's salvation; the behaviour of the survivors during the time of sorrow and affliction was considered to be a sign of God's grace in them as well and evidence therefore of their own incorporation into the elect.

The clerical correspondents recognised that need for practical action to help moderate grief. Oldfield encouraged one of Gell's daughters to supply her mother's place for her father in his grief, to 'labour to be as useful & comfortable to him' as she can and to rejoice his heart by following in her mother's footsteps.<sup>105</sup> Francis Tallents advised the Gell sisters to consult Edward Reyners 'rules of ye New Creature' or *Precepts for Christian Practice* (1644/1645),

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<sup>103</sup> Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, Gell of Hopton Hall, D258/38/11/24, Francis Gell to Temperance Gell, 9 Feb 1688/9

<sup>104</sup> Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, Gell of Hopton Hall, D258/11/29, Francis Tallents to Elizabeth Gell, 26 April 1689

<sup>105</sup> Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, Gell of Hopton Hall, D258/38/11/8, John Otefeld to 'Good Madam', 13 March 1671

a short handbook for Christian living which ran to thirteen editions.<sup>106</sup> One of the frequently expressed sentiments in the letters of consolation is that the deceased person was an example to emulate and a reminder of one's own mortality. The experience of grief could therefore be the inspiration to take one's own preparation for death seriously. John Isham's death in 1606 put a friend Giles Parsloe 'in minde and praye god if maye soer doe, to prepare myself that waye'.<sup>107</sup>

The frequent repetition of this advice suggests, however, that many did struggle to moderate their grief. Katherine Gell is a particularly well known example of overwhelming grief when her infant son died in 1655. It contributed to the spiritual despair which drove Gell to correspond at great length with two godly ministers Richard Baxter and Robert Porter.<sup>108</sup> Conversely Sir Edward Harley seems to have used his experience of death and grief to structure and enhance his personal devotion. Sir Edward composed eye-witness deathbed accounts of his wife Abigail and his daughter-in-law Elizabeth.<sup>109</sup> He found this to be a comforting devotional exercise and one that he continued for the course of his life, re-visiting the accounts for future devotional use. The notes on his father's death show signs of use at different times with different inks and variations in writing style. Two versions of the account of Elizabeth Harley's death are preserved together; one in a smaller format with rougher handwriting and numerous strike-through marks and abbreviations suggesting a draft and neat copy. As Elizabeth's husband Robert was not present it is possible that this deathbed account was prepared by Sir Edward for his son's benefit.

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<sup>106</sup> Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock, Gell of Hopton Hall, D258/11/29, Francis Tallents to Elizabeth Gell, 26 April 1689

<sup>107</sup> Northamptonshire Record Office, Northampton, Isham Correspondence, IC66, Giles Parsloe to John Isham, 7 March 1605/6

<sup>108</sup> See above section on self-examination.

<sup>109</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70126, Misc.9; 70130, Misc.91

Sir Edward's archives reveal the significance he placed on anniversaries and the structure it gave to his personal piety. There are numerous sets of meditations preserved in his archive all composed on his birthday each year, meditating upon God's providences throughout his life and especially in the preceding year.<sup>110</sup> Perhaps Sir Edward returned to the deathbed accounts on the anniversary of each death in the same way. Their careful preservation also suggests the accounts became artefacts of domestic religion with devotional use as pious and edificatory reading for other members of the family. Sir Edward's second son, also called Edward, adopted some of the same modes of piety; for he composed family memoirs revering his parents and grandparents in the early 1700s.<sup>111</sup> The experience, recording and commemoration of the family seems to have occupied a central place in the Harleys collective piety and contributed significantly to the formation of their family identity. They fashioned an image of themselves a godly family with an impeccable godly heritage underpinned by the memory of their pious forebears.

## Conclusion

The sickbed and deathbed prove to have been a fertile venue for exploring domestic religion. Sickness and death impacted on domestic religion by changing its location, participants, content and themes. Illness concentrated the mind of sick person and those around them alike and added an intensity to personal and communal domestic devotions. The experience of sickness and death inspired extraordinary devotions which brought together and linked the practices of domestic religion. It was an occasion with clear justification for intense domestic religion. As seen in this, and the previous chapter, the Harley family rarely discussed their extraordinary family religion in correspondence post-Restoration, likely due to the religio-political climate where communal religious exercises such as that could be construed as

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<sup>110</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70062, 21 October 1700; 21 October 1699, 21 October 1695

<sup>111</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70089, Misc.95

conventicles. However, they felt open to do so when it was connected with the illness or death of a family member. Devotional exercises to accompany sickness and death were not controversial despite some differences between conformists and Puritans on the importance and centrality of the presence of ministers.

Sickness and death was one of those occasions which accelerated the blurring of boundaries between different types of devotion, public, family, and personal. The continued importance of witnessing a good death, epitomised by the volumes of funeral sermons and godly lives published in the period, demonstrates the public nature of the deathbed. That interest brought domestic religion into the open for public consumption and judgement. At death, the personal was deeply public. Personal prayer, meditation, struggle, examination, and assurance was witnessed and made public. It was made public to testify the good death, and therefore salvation, of the individual and also to edify those left behind. Sickness and death acted as a catalyst for renewed repentance and assurance among family and friends. The extraordinary nature of the deathbed and the desire to testify and edify gave the impetus to record and memorialise domestic religion at the deathbed which affords the historian traces of these activities.

The very meaning of death, the question of salvation, was to finally join that wider community of, hopefully, the saved. Furthermore, families such as the Harleys understood their personal trials and tribulations in a providential light, alongside God's other providences to wider community and country. Personal afflictions such as sickness and death in the family contributed to their self-perception as an elect family. The trials were sent by God to try and confirm the faith of the family. The collective response and responsibility of the family to the personal illness of individual family members is striking and suggests the extent to which the Harleys saw themselves as a single pious unit. The Harleys seem to have had a corporate approach to salvation, any Harley is an elect Harley.



## Chapter 8: CONCLUSION

Lady Brilliana Harley died at Brampton Bryan Castle on 31 October 1643 between the two Royalist sieges of the castle. Sir Robert described her death as a 'breach' and begged God's mercy to sanctify it to him and their children.<sup>1</sup> Brilliana was reportedly buried within the castle grounds. When the second siege ended in surrender the following spring, the castle and Brampton Bryan's church were destroyed by the attacking troops.<sup>2</sup> As Thomas Froysell emphasised in his funeral sermon for Sir Robert the family began their rebuilding efforts with the Church which was finished in 1656.<sup>3</sup> During the interregnum, the Harleys lived in Ludlow and in another family property at Bucknell in Shropshire. In 1660, after Sir Robert's death, work finally started on the new house at Brampton Bryan under Sir Edward Harley's auspices.

The historian J.T. Cliffe reported that the new house was 'adjoining' the ruined castle.<sup>4</sup> It was only when I visited Brampton Bryan in the summer of 2016, however, that the literal truth of that became apparent. (Figure 11). The new house was separated from the ruin by only a few metres; the ruin was a neighbour, visible and manifest at all times. It has since been referred to as a folly or 'garden feature'.<sup>5</sup> The rebuilding of Brampton Bryan in that fashion was, however, a deliberate statement of faith and identity.

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<sup>1</sup> Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Fourteenth Report, Appendix II, The Manuscripts of His Grace the Duke of Portland*, 118, Sir Robert Harley to Nathaniel Wright and Samuel More, 4 November 1643; quoted in Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads*, 175

<sup>2</sup> Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Calendar of the manuscripts of the Marquis of Bath, preserved at Longleat, Wiltshire*, Vol.I, (1904), The Harley Papers, 22, An account of the sieges of Brampton Castle and the massacre of Hopton Castle, by Captain Priamus Davies, who was an eye witness

<sup>3</sup> Froysell, *Yadidyah, or, The Beloved Disciple*, 111

<sup>4</sup> Cliffe, *The Puritan Gentry Besieged*, 167

<sup>5</sup> Paul Martin Remfy, *Brampton Bryan Castle 1066-1309, and the civil war 1642 to 1646*, (Worcester: SCS Publishing, 1997), 40



**Figure 11: Brampton Bryan, Author's Photograph, Summer 2016,  
taken by kind permission of Edward Harley**

Sir Robert saw the destruction of Brampton Bryan as an affliction suffered for his faith. Thomas Froyssell reported Sir Robert's speech when he first saw the destruction: 'God hath brought Great Desolation upon the Place since I saw it; I desire to say, The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken, and blessed be the name of the Lord, in his good time he will raise it up again & when his House it built, God (I trust) will build mine'.<sup>6</sup> To rebuild the church first sent a strong statement of his belief in the religious nature of the Civil War and the motivations of the Royalist forces in Herefordshire. It also emphasises the primacy of religion in Sir Robert's outlook as well as the importance of public religion. The Harleys ensured they would have access to the public ordinances before they returned. Brampton Bryan did not have a domestic chapel, instead the proximity of house and church made their local church, St Barnabas, an extension of the house. Timbers from the original castle hall were used in the

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<sup>6</sup> Froyssell, *Yadidyah, or, The Beloved Disciple*, 111

construction of the double-hammerbeam roof of St Barnabas.<sup>7</sup> (Figure 12). While admittedly an economical reuse, it certainly brings a new meaning to the phrase 'make your houses...little churches'.<sup>8</sup> For the post-Restoration Harley family there must have been significance in sitting beneath the same timbers as their godly forebears for communal worship.



**Figure 12: Double Hammerbeam Roof, St Barnabas Church, Brampton Bryan, Author's Photograph, Summer 2016**

To leave the castle as a ruin and build the new house in such close proximity was a deliberate choice. The ruin served as a monument to Lady Brilliana, in the absence of any other, and as a reminder of her faith and resilience. Furthermore, its presence would have been a constant, material reminder of the afflictions the Harley family suffered for their religion and politics. It would also have been a reminder of God's afflictions and providences; shaping and conditioning religious behaviour within their domestic space. It was a reminder to be thankful for the family's deliverance and, with God's providence in mind, a reminder to maintain

<sup>7</sup> Private Communication, Edward Harley, 31 July 2016

<sup>8</sup> Gouge, *The Works of the Late Reverent and Pious Mr Thomas Gouge*, 262

morality, order, discipline, and domestic religion. Over time, the ruin would have served as a reminder of their pious forebears. The later Harleys took pride in the reputation of Sir Robert, Lady Brilliana, and Sir Edward Harley. Their history, ancestors, and depredations encapsulated by the ruin was vital to their identity as a godly family. To retain the ruin, caused, as they saw it, by their faith, was a powerful statement of their family identity as part of the godly community.

The Harleys' sense of family identity and history was a constant in their domestic religion. We saw in the chapters on family prayer and days of humiliation how Sir Robert and Sir Edward claimed and expressed a family identity as members of the persecuted godly elite in communal prayer. Lady Brilliana made the same assertions in her correspondence. Sir Edward Harley preserved the material traces of domestic religion, such as prayer notes and family letters, as evidence of their piety and as an example for emulation. He carefully preserved his notes on Sir Robert's death bed sayings and composed deathbed accounts of his wife and daughter-in-law for posterity.<sup>9</sup> The preservation of these treasured documents says something about their importance to family identity. It is also likely such material artefacts of family religion became a text used in future devotion. Past experience shaped later practice and served as edification for emulation. The manuscript deathbed accounts, Sir Edward Harley's birthday meditations, and Lady Brilliana's commonplace book and letters could all have been consumed as part of personal and communal domestic devotion. The role of domestic religion in the construction, internalisation, and projection of family identity has been a strong theme of this thesis and is encapsulated by the Harley family.

How representative were the Harleys, and the other families and individuals whose prescriptions and lived experience are glimpsed here? The prescriptive literature has shown

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<sup>9</sup> British Library, London, Additional Manuscripts, 70130, Misc. 73, Sir Edward Harley's notes as to the character and sayings of his father; Misc.91 Sir Edward Harley's account of the last sickness and death of his wife Abigail (October 20 1688)

that clerical authors across the mainstream religious spectrum encouraged and guided their lay communities towards domestic religion. There were however, differences in their programmes: the content and structures. Authors from the conformist tradition promoted a programme of domestic religion focussed on established texts and set forms, while writers from the puritan tradition encouraged a greater personalisation, flexibility, lay independence, and range of practices in domestic religion.

The traces of lived experience typically survive more from families following a puritan style of piety. This was not because conformist or Anglican families did not engage in domestic religion, instead their practice was based around printed material such as the Bible, *Book of Common Prayer*, and devotional guides such as Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living*. Devotions based on set forms did not occasion the production of additional manuscript material. Families such as the Ferrars of Little Gidding, whose 'voluntary Anglicanism' was documented, are rare, but only in that it was well documented and recently discussed by historians.<sup>10</sup> The key difference between godly and conforming styles of piety is reflectiveness; the godly were motivated to record, reflect, and analyse their domestic religion in a way their conforming counterparts were not. It was puritan desire to achieve assurance of being part of God's elect which led them to self-consciously record and reflect on their practice of domestic religion.

Domestic religion, despite being a shared culture, was criss-crossed by denominational difference and some of the debates involved cut to the quick of those differences. Discussions of the ideal manner of conducting communal or personal prayer were inflected by debates over the ideal balance and orientation of piety between public, family, and personal expressions and practices. For example, the concern of conformists to assert that primacy led

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<sup>10</sup> Joyce Ransome, "'Voluntary Anglicanism': The Contribution of Little Gidding", *The Seventeenth Century*, 24, no 1, (2009), 52-73.

to an implicit ambivalence about family and personal duties. Jeremy Taylor, and conformist and Anglican prescriptive authors like him, encouraged domestic religion but did not present an inspirational vision of practice. Instead they focused on providing set forms to structure family religion in an acceptable fashion. The importance puritans laid on preaching and the Bible prompted practices such as sermon repetition and psalm singing to assume a central place in their domestic religion which became a marker of their identity. We have seen how puritan salvation theology inspired a reflective approach to domestic religion, it also inspired practices such as self-examination, diary writing, and the communal meta-practice of days of humiliation and fasting.

The flashpoints of domestic religion become more apparent when prescription and lived experience is firmly situated within its temporal context. For the godly, the 1630s was a time of pressure when they felt their domestic religion was subject to scrutiny. Both Sir Robert Harley and Sir Simonds D'Ewes defended their domestic religion at this time in a way that shows how the godly felt threatened by Laudian interpretation of puritan family religion that had until then been considered fairly innocuous. Post-Restoration the domestic religion of puritans again came under pressure. Puritan prescriptive authors and families wanted to present their domestic religious practices in an as orthodox light as possible. The effect of the legislation which re-established the Church of England and controlled the activities of sequestered ministers was to link political trustworthiness with Church of England loyalty. Anglicans therefore viewed the voluntary religious practices of moderate puritans with suspicion and the godly were concerned to disassociate themselves from the seditious conventicles of the sects. The behaviour of the Harley family with their occasional conformity, and the circumspection with which they discussed their domestic religion in correspondence, shows this in action.

Another important focus in this thesis has been the relationship between prescription and the reality of lived experience. Much of the previous historiography primarily used prescriptive literature to paint a picture of domestic religion. This thesis has deepened the archival research into the lived experience of domestic religion, at least in godly families such as the Harleys, D'Ewes, and Gells. In addition, sources such as the diaries of Lady Margaret Hoby and Lady Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick, have been reappraised and reconsidered through the lens of domestic religion.

Transmission of prescription into practice has been revealed as more complex than either an internalisation and reproduction, or a rejection and reinvention of prescription. Seventeenth century lay people engaged with prescriptive guidance and found within it encouragement as well as instruction. Katherine Gell discussed Richard Baxter's guidance in her correspondence with clerical confidant Robert Porter. Lay people like Lady Mary Rich took on board and put into practice the ideas of Joseph Hall in their meditation. Sir Simonds D'Ewes was influenced by Henry Mason's treatise on fasting so significantly that he cited it in his autobiography, composed a decade later, as the reason for introducing days of fasting into his domestic religion.<sup>11</sup> The prescriptive literature shaped practice. Yet, as we saw, puritan D'Ewes adapted Arminian Mason's programme and recommendations to suit his own piety. Lived experience drew inspiration from a range of prescriptive sources, even those espousing a conflicting view on salvation. Adaptation of prescriptive advice also happened for practical reasons, for example changing fasting practices or shortening family prayer to suit the health of those involved in the manner of Lady Anne D'Ewes or Sir Robert Harley.

I contend that the image and practices of domestic religion portrayed in the prescriptive literature were ideal types. It seems likely that the prescriptive authors themselves expected, and accepted, a process of adaptation and assimilation of their ideas in lived experience. It is

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<sup>11</sup> See above, 229

hard to imagine that a prescriptive writer expected a slavish adherence to the letter and law of a set of devotional guidelines. One thinks of Lady Margaret Hoby and Lady Mary Rich who patterned their personal morning devotions in different ways depending on season and inclination but who performed the overall intention of advice such as Lewis Bayly's. Lewis Bayly's *The Practise of Pietie* was immensely popular and for that reason I have returned to it time and again. Its popularity can be attributed to the fact that it catered to different levels of devotional experience. It was straightforward and detailed enough to guide the inexperienced through its programme. At the same time, it was supremely flexible and adaptable in a way that suited the piously intense and highly educated. Moreover, the prescriptive authors were also real seventeenth century clerics with whom the laity corresponded, worshipped, and socialised. The laity valued the advice and support of their clerical associates in a living breathing fashion. The prescriptive advice they presented in print simplified, what the authors knew to be, a multifaceted process.

As part of the effort to deepen the lived experience of domestic religion I have paid attention to its spatial and material aspects. Although much of the archival evidence of domestic religion is decoupled from its spatial context, there are some helpful references to the spaces and locations of practices. The Harley family used spatial signifiers extensively and attached much meaning to joining together in the parlour for family prayer. Lady Mary Rich traced her daily devotions through the spaces she performed them in, from closet to the garden. There was great variety of spatial contexts for domestic religion including those not actually inside the house. It prompts a re-evaluation of what is meant by domestic religion. A key variable turns out to be the identity of the participants in domestic religious practices. It was practices like days of humiliation and fasting, or sermon repetition where the presence of those from beyond the immediate household was more likely, which proved to be the most contentious

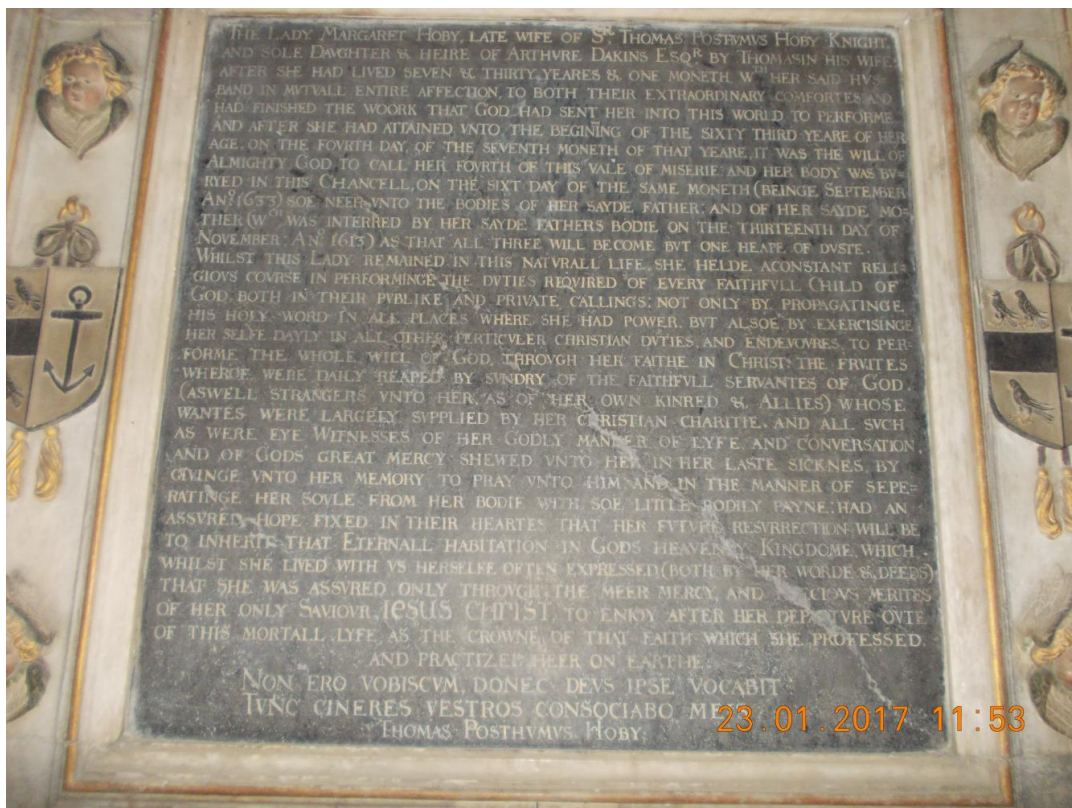


parts of domestic religion. The chapter on personal devotions showed that even individual devotions were less individual than perhaps previously thought.

Historians have long acknowledged the permeability of the boundaries between public and private. Domestic religion demonstrates this in several ways. Firstly, the personal and domestic was always public in the seventeenth century. One of the main rationales for domestic religion was its support of public religion and state. Through the well-ordered and religious family would good subjects and members of the church be made. The sickbed and deathbed for instance was ostensibly private and domestic but there was strong public interest and stake in the performances in and around that bed. The tensions around certain practices at certain times demonstrate clearly the significance of domestic religion for public concerns. The political and ecclesiastical authorities were concerned about the extent of their control over the domestic. The domestic space had the potential to replace the church as the primary focus of worship. In the minds of the authorities, devotional autonomy could breed political disloyalty.

Secondly, the performance of domestic religious practices transcended the boundaries of public and private. Devotional practices were linked together in chains of interrelated practices which crossed from domestic to public, and back again. Prayer was a continuum from personal, through family, to public with each acting as preparation for the other. The Lord's Supper brought together a range of personal practices in preparation for the formal act of public devotion, which, it was hoped, inspired further heights of personal devotion. Other practices transported the public into the domestic space and back again. Sermon repetition was part of a chain of devotional practices which took the sermon from public to personal, to family, and potentially to public practice again. Psalm singing also spanned public, family, and personal. It becomes impossible to talk of separate spheres of devotion once the extent to which each practice fed into one another becomes clear.

The lack of interest in the domestic, until relatively recently, derives in part from the seemingly reflexive association of domestic religion with women's religion. This thesis has shown domestic religion to be as significant for the male members of the archival families studied, as it was for the female members. Both men and women were responsible for communal family religion and invested in their own personal practices. Lady Margaret Hoby's monument in Hackness church (Figure 13) includes a powerful statement of piety: 'She held a constant religious course in performinge the duties required of every faithfull child of God, both in their public and private callings: not only by propagatinge the his holy word in all places where she had power but also be exercisinge her self dayly in all other perticuler Christian duties and endevoures to performe the whole will of God'. The phrase 'all places where she had power' is striking and speaks to how Lady Hoby was able to use her social status as mistress and local gentlewomen to promote religion and piety. It shows the significance of personal and domestic religion for public statements of faith.



**Figure 13: Lady Margaret Hoby's Monument in Hackness Church, by kind permission of Kathleen Hugill**

A related theme has been to emphasise the social nature of puritan piety through the lens of domestic religion. The puritan concern to gain assurance of election to salvation through practices such as self-examination and meditation has often led to a characterisation of puritan piety as inherently interiorised. A closer look at the specific domestic practices involved in the search for assurance, self-examination, diary keeping, and more has revealed that they had many social elements themselves. Lady Brilliana Harley discussed her methods of self-examination in her correspondence, Sir Simonds D'Ewes and his wife Anne collaborated on their written evidences of assurance, and Katherine Gell sent her diary to Richard Baxter and Robert Porter for their comments upon her assurance. Days of humiliation and fasting were a communal effort at assurance. Furthermore, the search for assurance was to take one's place as part of the elect; it was inherently social in that it aimed towards that shared identity.

In addition to its sociability, I have also highlighted the textuality of domestic religion. This thesis stresses the vital facilitating role played by reading, and especially writing, in the performance of domestic religious practices. Beyond expressly devotional reading, a domestic religious exercise in itself; reading and writing allowed the other exercises to be performed. The multiplicity of these acts of reading and writing have been made visible in a way that most approaches to religious reading and writing have not. To pray using a set form is to perform prayer by reading. Sir Edward Harley's birthday meditations and the deathbed accounts of his wife and daughter-in-law are an example of meditation through writing. Reading and writing also provide the links between domestic religious practices. Writing facilitated the transformation of Bible and other devotional reading into extemporaneous prayer. I made the case for letter writing as domestic religious practice. Through correspondence participation in godly networks was facilitated, assurance, and spiritual anguish was worked

through, godly identity was fashioned, edification and consolation was offered, and religious duties were performed.

The opening paragraphs of this thesis presented the simple and compelling image of domestic religion from the frontispiece of Lewis Bayly's *The Practise of Pietie*. This simplicity was replicated in secondary accounts of spiritualised households which listed practices in straightforward fashion. Christopher Hill, who coined the term 'the spiritualised household' covered actual practices in one sentence: 'There were prayers twice daily, three times on Sundays: there was bible-reading, and children and servants were catechized.'<sup>12</sup> The main objective of this thesis, alongside the other themes already discussed, has been to expand those lists into a nuanced account of domestic religion. My research revealed the complexity of domestic religion. Practices were not isolated from one another, instead they overlapped and linked together in a variety of ways. One practice acted as preparation for another in a contiguous cycle of devotion. Not only was the practice of domestic religion complex, the intersections of denominational tradition, religio-politics, change, continuity, gender, social status, and more are slippery to trace as well. Further research, particularly in the archives of seventeenth century families, will be needed to build flesh on the bones of these intersections.

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<sup>12</sup> Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England*, 392

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